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OUTER LIMITS

SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

Behind-the-scenes of
Showtime's premier
SF anthology,
makeup by Steve
Johnson's XFX.

Volume 30 Number 5/6



TALOS, THE MUMMY
CHRISTOPHER LEE
UNIVERSAL SOLDIERS II & III
HALLOWEEN H20:
THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY

CINEFANTASTIQUE



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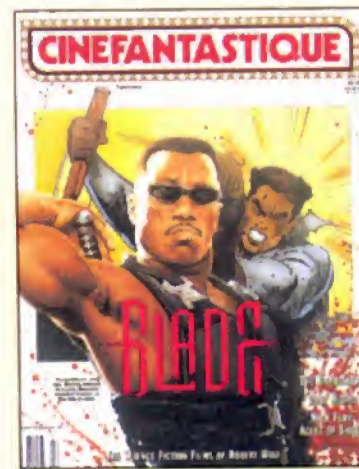
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CONTENTS

VOLUME 30 NUMBER 5/6

"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

SEPTEMBER 1998

As **THE OUTER LIMITS** unveils its fourth season of tantalizing science fiction episodes on Showtime and continues airing in syndication, we felt it was time to pay tribute to the finest SF anthology on television. This special double issue not only chronicles the filming of the show in Vancouver but takes a look at the roots of the series in the work of Joseph Stefano and the late Leslie Stevens on the original **OUTER LIMITS** of the '60s.

Vancouver correspondent Frank Garcia spent two years putting together our book-length coverage, haunting the ever-changing sets of the SF anthology at Vancouver's mammoth Bridge Studios. Garcia interviewed series creators Pen Densham and Richard Lewis of Trilogy Entertainment, as well as many of the producers, writers and directors who have established a new beachhead on television for literate science fiction adaptations as well as original stories. Garcia also interviewed the late Leslie Stevens before his unexpected passing last April, as well as writer/producer Joseph Stefano, the creators of the original series who acted as consultants for the new revival.

Garcia also provides a look behind-the-scenes at the creation of the show's mesmerizing title sequence, and a profile of Kevin Conway, its unseen but hypnotic control voice. Sidebar articles provide a closer look at the making of some of the series' finest episodes, including adaptations of Larry Niven's Nebula-winning "Inconstant Moon," George R. R. Martin's "Sandkings," and Joseph Stefano's "A Feasibility Study," a re-make of one of the classic series' finest shows. For those eager to sample the **LIMITS** cornucopia of genre offerings in syndicated re-runs, Garcia chronicles the series' first three seasons of episodes in a detailed, illustrated guide, rated and annotated with the comments of the show's creators. A handy index on page 103 should help you zero-in on the title of your choice.

So sit back, let them take control of your TV set. You'll find that you're in for some surprisingly good genre entertainment. *Frederick S. Clarke*



Page 7



Page 16



Page 24



Page 51



Page 104

7 "HALLOWEEN 20"

After 20 years, Jamie Lee Curtis returns in the mother of all teen horror pics. / *Article by Douglas Eby*

12 "UNIVERSAL SOLDIERS II"

Ex-linebacker-turned-actor Matt Battaglia steps into the shoes of Jean-Claude Van Damme. / *Article by Paul Wardle*

16 "TALOS: THE MUMMY"

Russell Mulcahy's high-tech Egyptian shocker comes to life, with Christopher Lee. / *Article by Alan Jones*

24 "THE OUTER LIMITS"

Reinventing sci-fi's classic TV anthology for the '90s: Showtime's **OUTER LIMITS** enters its fourth season. / *Article by Frank Garcia*

51 "THE OUTER LIMITS"—STEFANO & STEVENS

Original **OUTER LIMITS** creators Leslie Stevens and Joseph Stefano on watching the new show. / *Article by Frank Garcia*

65 "THE OUTER LIMITS"—A RETROSPECT

Remembering the stuff that nightmares are made of—some highlights from the original series. / *Article by Frank Garcia*

75 "THE OUTER LIMITS"—OLD VS. NEW

Testing the limits: finding new ways to revive a much-loved series from the Sixties. / *Article by Frank Garcia*

104 POLTERGEIST

OUTER LIMITS' sister series moves to the Sci-Fi Channel in its third year. / *Article by Frank Garcia*

110 STARGATE SG1

The movie spin-off starts Season Two on Showtime, a sci-fi sister for **OUTER LIMITS** producer MGM. / *Article by Frank Garcia*

112 SLIDERS

After Fox cancels it, **SLIDERS** moves to Universal's Sci-Fi channel, trying to stay on course. / *Article by David Z.C. Hines*

117 GEORGE R. R. MARTIN'S "DOORWAYS"

The story behind the celebrated SF author's unsold alternate universe pilot. / *Article by Sheldon Teitelbaum*

120 TERRY GILLIAM ON "FEAR & LOATHING"

Director Gilliam talks about filming Hunter S. Thompson's pop classic drug fantasy, starring Johnny Depp. / *Article by Alan Jones*

5 HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

123 REVIEWS

126 LETTERS

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EAGERLY AWAITED

SIX STRING SAMURAI (Palm Pictures)

"Six-String Samurai" is the brainchild of first-time director Lance Mungia, who shows us a rockin'-rollin' post-apocalyptic future in true Japanimation style for the live-action big screen. Back in 1957, the Russians dropped the bomb and took over what was once the U.S. In the free-lands of a place called Lost Vegas, Elvis was crowned King. It's forty years later, and the King is dead. Enter Buddy (Jeffrey Falcon), the six-string samurai who would be king. During his travels through the wastelands to Lost Vegas to strum and slash it out with other warrior-musicians, Buddy saves an orphaned boy (Justin McGuire) who won't be left behind. Death and his dreaded archers are in hot pursuit of Buddy and the coveted crown. Together, Buddy and The Kid cross paths with those Russian-born rock 'n' roll surfers, The Red Elvises (who also contributed to the soundtrack), demented bounty-hunting bowlers, the cannibalistic Cleaver family, the Windmill God, and the ragged remains of the Russian army. In true anime fashion, Buddy battles 200 Russians and then finally faces Death and his archers at the very gates of Lost Vegas with only his skill with his sword and his six-string guitar to save him and The Kid. A prequel comic by Awesome Entertainment will coincide with the movie's release. **Desire Gonzales**

September



RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Jay Stevenson
(unless otherwise noted)

AIRBUD: GOLDEN RETRIEVER (Miramax) August 14

The basketball-playing pooch hits the courts once again, in this sequel to last year's AIRBUD. Wonder dog Buddy is up to his old tricks when he breaks into a pro game his owners are attending. After seeing Buddy's on-court antics, two animal collectors decide he would be the perfect star attraction for their fledgling Moscow circus—and make plans to kidnap him. Richard Martin directed. Kevin Zegers, Cynthia Stevenson, and Gregory Harrison compete with the dog for screentime.

THE AVENGERS (WB) August 14

Having been delayed from a June 19 debut, this update of the '60s spy show finally reaches the big screen. Ralph Fiennes, Uma Thurman, and Sean Connery star for director Jeremiah Chechik (DIABOLIQUE); Patrick Macnee makes a cameo.

BLADE (New Line) August

This film was originally supposed to come out in February but was pushed back at the last minute, apparently to allow more time for work on the big CGI finale. Since John Carpenter's VAMPIRES is now slated for September distribution from Sony, New Line has decided they'd better stop delaying if they want to be the first vampire hunter out of the gate. Stephen Norrington (DEATH MACHINE) directed Wesley Snipes as the live-action version of the Marvel comic book superhero who is half-man, half-vampire. SEE COVER STORY IN CFQ 29:10.

CUBE (Trimark) September?

For this excellent film, Trimark has, unfortunately, revived the modus operandi they applied to their last science-fiction release, STAR KID, with such dismal results: namely, they announce a release date, and push it back; then they announce another release date, and push that back, as well; etc, etc, etc—until, by the time the film eventually comes out, no one cares anymore. It's especially sad in this case, because the film deserves better; it may be too small a movie to become a crossover mainstream hit, but it definitely has what it takes to become a revered cult item. REVIEWED IN CFQ 30:02.

DISTURBING BEHAVIOR (MGM) Now playing

Despite initial denials from MGM ("We're not moving," said Larry Gleason), this film was pushed up from a planned August 7 release date to July 22, in order to avoid a head-to-head confrontation after Dimension moved HALLOWEEN H20 to August 7. SEE CFQ 30:4.

EVER AFTER: A CINDERELLA STORY (Fox) Now playing

Fox's Family Film division opened this revisionist version of the beloved fairy tale on August 7. Drew Barrymore stars in the title role. Anjelica Huston co-stars as the Wicked Stepmother.

HALLOWEEN H20 (Dimension) August 7

This attempt to revive the moribund franchise—by recreating it in the mold of SCREAM—pulled a fast one and hit screens months ahead of its namesake holiday. Steve Miner directed. Jamie Lee Curtis is back as Laurie Strode. SEE PAGE 7.

I MARRIED A STRANGE PERSON (Lion's Gate) Now playing

Bill Plympton's second animated art house feature is touring the same upscale art houses where you've seen his short subjects (e.g., the "Sex and Violence" portion of GENERAL CHAOS: UNCENSORED ANIMATION). SEE CFQ 30:4.

MY FAVORITE MARTIAN (Disney) Winter

At one time skedded to compete in the heat of the hectic summer season, this remake of the old TV sitcom decided to sit out the summer.

JOHN CARPENTER'S VAMPIRES (Sony) October 30

After this film's encouraging debut in France, Sony picked up U.S. distribution rights to John Carpenter's vampire-western. A September 11 release was announced, before Sony decided that Halloween would be more a propitious time.

VIRUS (Universal) early 1999

Originally scheduled to come out August 14, opposite THE AVENGERS, this science-fiction horror effort was pushed back after star Jamie Lee Curtis' other horror film, H20, moved up to August 7—too close for studio comfort. SEE CFQ 30:4.

SCHOOL'S OUT

APT PUPIL (TriStar)

An anticipated Spring release was abandoned for this adaptation of the Steven King novella, in favor of a Halloween-timed debut.

This also gave TriStar more time to run the trailer in theatres—it's really great, suggesting a genuinely disturbing film, but aren't you starting to get tired of it by now? Anyway, Brad Renfro stars as high school student Todd Bowden, who discovers that Nazi war criminal Kurt Dussander (Ian McKellen) has been quietly living in Todd's home town, under an assumed identity. Fascinated by the atrocities Dussander committed during the war, Todd blackmails him into relating the hideous details in exchange for Todd's silence. Bryan Singer (THE USUAL SUSPECTS) directed, from a screenplay by Brandon Boyce. Bruce Davison (WILLARD) and Elias Koteas (CRASH) co-star.

October 23



HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

PSYCHO

Universal plans to film a remake from the original shooting script.

by Dan Cziraky

Director Gus Van Sant (GOOD WILL HUNTING) is prepping a remake of Alfred Hitchcock's 1960 classic PSYCHO for Universal Pictures, using Hitchcock's original shooting script by Joseph Stefano, the original storyboards by Saul Bass, and the original score by Bernard Herrmann. Van Sant plans to cast young, trendy actors in the roles originated by Anthony Perkins, Janet Leigh, Vera Miles, and John Gavin—a la SCREAM. Drew Barrymore's and Nicole Kidman's names popped up for the role of Marion Crane before Anne Heche (I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER) was signed, while just about every hunk from Ben Affleck and Kevin Costner to George Clooney and Kevin Bacon were being wooed for Norman Bates, until the director decided upon the relatively unknown Vince Vaughn (THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK). Actually, if you went back to Robert Bloch's original novel, the perfect actor to play bald, pudgy fifty-ish Norman would be Peter Boyle—although just to keep things trendy, they could have gone with Drew Carey! Julianne Moore (another LOST WORLD alumni) will play



Vince Vaughn, seen above in THE LOST WORLD: JURASSIC PARK, has been cast as the new Norman Bates in Universal's remake of PSYCHO.

Lila Crane, Marion's sister.

What absolutely nobody seems to be taking into consideration is what a monumentally bad idea this whole project is! It's very rare that remakes are justified on an artistic level. Certainly, films adapted from literary sources are the major exception, when filmmakers can bring new interpretations to the classics. For example, who would fault the 1939 version of THE HUNCHBACK

OF NOTRE DAME (starring Charles Laughton), even though the 1923 Lon Chaney vehicle is still a classic?

However, there's something about certain films that makes the idea of remakes a form of blasphemy. Who's going to even try redoing GONE WITH THE WIND, CASABLANCA, or THE WIZARD OF OZ? These are timeless classics that were done right the first time—the results of the right artists working together in a once-in-a-lifetime combination. RKO's KING KONG (1933) still fascinates audiences, while Paramount's 1976 abomination is remembered only for launching Jessica Lange's career. Universal's 1979 DRACULA brought together the talents of Frank Langella, Sir Lawrence Olivier, and Donald Pleasance, yet it still couldn't

hold a flickering candle to the studio's own chilling 1931 original with Bela Lugosi.

Today, there exists an arrogance within the film industry which dictates that classic films and stories need to be "reinterpreted" for contemporary film audiences. Could it be that this is a lame attempt to hide the fact that Hollywood is bereft of fresh ideas?

Science-fiction and horror seem particularly susceptible to the remake frenzy. Because these genres aren't taken seriously (despite generating huge boxoffice numbers) they are regularly plundered by the creatively bankrupt.

It was bad enough when Brian DePalma regularly borrowed from Hitchcock for his horror-thrillers (SISTERS DRESSED TO KILL, etc), but at least he usually brought something of his own creative vision into the mix. For Universal to allow Van Sant to literally plagiarize an entire film is akin to public necrophilia. Of course, if they could get away with digging up Sir Alfred's body and sell tickets, they might consider that, too!

Psycho, Too

by Jay Stevenson

Norman Bates, meet Norman Bateman. That's right: just as Universal is gearing up for its pointless remake of the Hitchcock classic PSYCHO, Lions Gate Films has agreed to finance THE CROW-producer Ed Pressman's long-in-development filmization of *American Psycho*, the notorious novel by Brett Easton Ellis. Not only that, but they've hired TITANIC star Leonardo DiCaprio to play the lead, for a staggering \$21-million.

Shooting is expected to begin in New York this fall, with a budget of \$40 million. Let's see, after Leo gets his chunk, that leaves how much for the rest of the film? Actually, even setting aside only \$19 million for below-the-line costs represents a big jump in budget for AMERICAN PSYCHO, which had been planned as a \$6 million feature, starring Christian Bale and directed by Mary Harron, who co-wrote the screenplay with Guinevere Turner. Bale is now out of the picture, and Harron has doubts about committing to a big-budget version, over which she may have little or no control. The producers are, therefore, looking for other potential directors.

The book follows the exploits of Norman Bateman, a charming young Wall Street stockbroker who is a serial killer by night. The first-person narrative, as told by Bateman, minutely details every element of his escapades, with particular attention to designer label names and graphic moments of horrendous violence. (Bateman is less moved by the plight of his victims than by the sight of his \$45 handkerchief after blowing a noseful of "ropy strings of blood and snot" into it.) When originally published in 1990, the novel created a firestorm of controversy thanks to feminists who labeled it misogynistic; the resulting publicity helped the book become a best-seller. Since then, several filmmakers have considered the challenge of adapting the book into a film (including, at one point, David Cronenberg) but this is as close as the film has ever been to becoming reality.

Short Notes

Arnold Schwarzenegger is planning to star in TOTAL RECALL 2, which is now at Dimension Pictures, since bankruptcy put an end to Carolco, which produced the original. **Ron Shusett** and **Gary Goldman** are back on board to write the script, and **Jonathan Frakes** (STAR TREK: FIRST CONTACT) has been asked to direct. ☺ Actor **Robin Williams** and director **Christopher Columbus**, who made MRS. DOUBTFIRE together, are planning to reteam on BICENTENNIAL MAN, a science fiction effort adapted by Nick Kazan from a short story by Isaac Asimov. ☺ Cult director **Katt Shea** (DANCE OF THE DAMNED) as taken over the directorial reigns from Robert Mandell on CARRIE II. ☺ Who said Hollywood doesn't forgive? Director **Renny Harlin**, who set some kind of record for inverse budget-to-boxoffice ratio with CUTTHROAT ISLAND, has convinced Warner Bros and Village Roadshow to co-finance his next big-budget pic, DEEP BLUE SEA, about a scientist who genetically engineer sharks with the intelligence of dolphins. Sounds kind of like PETER BENCHLEY'S CREATURE. □

SUPERNOVA

After many alien encounters, Walter Hill finally directs a mission to space.

by Dale Kutzera

SUPERNOVA concerns the six-person crew of the deep-space medical vessel, the Nightingale 229. Their adventure begins when they respond to an emergency distress signal from a comet mining operation, and the action ensues when a lone survivor is brought on board, along with a mysterious alien artifact found in the heart of the comet.

Filming for the United Artists' space thriller commenced on April 13 in a converted LAX airplane hangar, under the direction of Walter Hill (THE WARRIORS). The cavernous space was transformed by production designer Marek Dobrowolski (THE CRAFT) into a futuristic mining operation 3000 meters beneath the surface of a comet. To make it as realistic as possible, the filmmakers turned to astronomer Jacklyn Green, head of the Extraterrestrial Materials Simulation Laboratory at the Pasadena-based Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Green, who specializes in creating simulated comet structures, envisioned a cavern of dirty clumps of ice. Dobrowolski had a team of 35 sculptors, working round the clock,



U.A.'s big-budget SUPERNOVA began life as DEAD STAR, a script by William Malone that died in Development Hell, despite artwork by H.R. Giger (above).

carve huge blocks of Styrofoam for the cavern walls. The Styrofoam was sealed with polyurethane, then painted a brownish gray. Finally, the entire setting, including equipment towers and mining tracks, was blasted with salt to simulate

the ice crystals.

The film began as a pitch by writer-director Bill Malone to producer Ash Shah at Imperial Entertainment. "I pitched an idea of DEAD CALM set in space and they liked it a lot," said Malone. "I drafted up a script called DEAD STAR and we got into some heavy pre-production. I spend two months developing, with an art director, a lot of art and story-boards. I was going to be the writer-director on the picture, but as we got into it, it turned out that it would have been five or six million beyond the scope of what Imperial wanted to do. At that point, the picture fell by the wayside and I guess some time later they sold it United Artists."

The story was re-written by David Campbell Wilson, Cathy Rabin, Dan Chuba, and Thomas Wheeler, although final writing credits have not been determined as of this writing. Hill joined the production relatively late in the process, after much of the production design had been finalized. Although his previous directing credits emphasize action-adventure (48 HOURS, EXTREME PREJUDICE), as executive producer he has overseen the ALIEN film franchise and the recent TALES FROM THE CRYPT series and features. □

Rehaunted House

by Dale Kutzera

Writer-director Bill Malone (CREATURE) is hard at work on another feature project—a remake of the 1959 Vincent Price vehicle HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL, which was produced and directed by the legendary horror impresario and gimmick-master William Castle. The project reunites Malone with writer Dick Bebe, who worked with him on the TALES FROM THE CRYPT episode called "Only Skin Deep."

"That episode got a lot of praise and so [producers Bob Zemeckis and Joel Silver] wanted to put the team back together," Malone explained. "They had bought the rights to the William Castle Library and asked me if I would direct one. I said I liked [HOUSE ON HAUNTED

HILL] a lot, but when I was a kid, I was disappointed because there was no real ghost in it. Ours will have ghosts that can do really bad things to you."

Perhaps the most difficult task will be finding a replacement for the lead role. In an era of SCREAM-teen horror, there seems to be no adult equivalent for the horror icons like Price, Peter Cushing, and Christopher Lee. "We really have no horror stars of today, and it is a shame," said Malone. "This is a leftover from HALLOWEEN. It is a terrific picture; unfortunately, the studios only see horror films as being teenagers chased by guys with knives. There is so much more to be done, and it is disheartening." □

Production Starts



ALIEN LOVE TRIANGLE

This anthology, with episodes directed by Bill Forsyth and Danny Boyle, stars Kenneth Branagh, Heather Graham, and Courteney Cox.

DINOSAUR

Ralph Zondag and Eric Leighton are directing this combination of live-action and animation for Walt Disney Studios.

KILLING MRS. TINGLE

The unstoppable horror of the Kevin Williamson juggernaut continues. Now, the writer of SCREAM is making his directorial debut, working from an old script he wrote before his current mega-success. Helen Mirren stars; Lesley Ann Warren and Molly Ringwald play supporting roles.

TOBY'S STORY

Patricia Arquette, Gabriel Byrne, Patrick Muldoon, and Jonathan Pryce star in this ghost story directed by Rupert Wainwright, from a script by Tom Lazarus. Frank Mancuso, Jr. produces. Let's hope this turns out better than SPECIES III!

THE WILD, WILD WEST

Will Smith and Kevin Kline take the leads in this remake of the old TV show—a Western that had less to do with John Wayne than James Bond, filled as it was with incredible, sometimes anachronistic 19th-century gadgets and weaponry that pushed the show into science-fiction territory. Barry Sonnenfeld (MIB) directs, from a script by Peter Seaman and Jeffrey Price. Kenneth Branagh plays the bad guy; Salma Hayek co-stars.

WISHMASTER 2: EVIL NEVER DIES

Although the awful original gorefest of last year failed to break-even theatrically, it did well enough on video to justify this follow-up, which will most likely bypass theatres altogether. Andrew Divoff returns as the evil djinn. The writing and directing chores have passed to Jack Shoulder, who helmed the excellent THE HIDDEN but also the lame A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2: FREDDY'S REVENGE. Did the producers really have to announce in the title that their lead character is unkillable, and therefore capable of returning in sequel after sequel?

Jamie Lee Curtis as Laurie Strode in an anniversary rematch with the Shape (inset), the incarnation of the bogeyman she faced in the 1979 horror shocker.



HALLOWEEN 20

Miramamax gives John Carpenter's 1979 horror classic a SCREAM makeover.

By Douglas Eby

It is still a hallmark of the genre, and the first HALLOWEEN (1978) continues to get acclaim, such as landing in a recent *People Magazine* list of the Ten Best Horror Movies of All Time. Its director, John Carpenter has credited *PSYCHO* for inspiration, and for being the start of so many slasher movies. Approached in the '70s by producer Moustapha Akkad, who liked his earlier films, Carpenter signed on to do a low-budget horror picture originally called *THE BABYSITTER MURDERS* about a psychopath who stalks babysitters. Interviewed for a magazine article on independent filmmaking ("Ghoul's Night Out" by Chris Nashawaty, *Entertainment Weekly*), Debra Hill, the film's producer and cowriter, commented: "I wrote most of the girls' dialogue, and John wrote all of [bogeyman hunter] Dr. Loomis' 'evil' stuff. We put in all kinds

of inside jokes: It takes place in Haddonfield, Ill., and I grew up in Haddonfield, N.J. And the name Laurie Strode was the name of one of John's old girlfriends. We wrote the whole thing in three weeks. Then we just had to find the right actors... I knew casting Jamie Lee would be great publicity for the film because her mother [Janet Leigh] was in *PSYCHO*. At least I knew she had the genes to

scream well."

Curtis recalled in the same article: "I remember seeing the name Laurie with all these lines of dialogue on every page of the script, so I'm thinking this is huge. I'm not thinking, 'Oh, this is a teen horror movie.' ... The idea of having the lead role was amazing. Once I got the part I knew I'd get the chance to act because I wasn't playing the smart-alec girl with the nice tits. Or the airheaded cheer-

leader." She also recalled that there was a great sense of camaraderie on the set "because it was such a young crew. In TV at the time, it was all those old union guys who had been in the lighting union forever, and they couldn't care less. But on HALLOWEEN, everyone had the fire in the belly, and they rode motorcycles and had tattoos and long hair. It was way cool."

That key casting decision was one of the choices that made the film the perennial horror classic it became. Michelle Williams, one of the stars of HALLOWEEN 20, Dimension Films 20th Anniversary Tribute, said she wanted to do it for the chance to work with Curtis, and appreciates the first one: "I think that it was incredibly effective, and far ahead of its time," said Williams, the star of TV's *DAWSON'S CREEK*. "It really is pretty much what started the whole genre." Besides the casting of Curtis, and of course Donald

The Shape, aka disturbed teen Michael Myers, resurfaced in five sequels from 1981 to 1995, and now returns to reap the benefits of a '90s horror revival.



H2O

ADAM ARKIN

From horror movie teen to teacher.

By Douglas Eby

In HALLOWEEN: H2O Adam Arkin plays Will Brennen, a guidance counselor and teacher at the school headed by Laurie Strode/Keri Tate (Jamie Lee Curtis). His character, noted Arkin, does not have the psychological expertise of his acclaimed TV role on CHICAGO HOPE, Dr. Aaron Shutt, but he said, with a wry smile, "I have enough Freud just in my own personal background."

Arkin decided to do this new HALLOWEEN based on a number of elements, including "the chance to work with a combination of people that I'd worked with before, and I'd really enjoyed them. Steve [Miner] directed an episode of CHICAGO HOPE. And I had never worked with Jamie before, but I knew her socially, as a friend, and the fact I had her vote of confidence and that she wanted me on board made me really happy. It was an honor she wanted me. When I saw the script I was really delighted to see how much humor and intelligence it was done with. And I also didn't feel I had to be doing anything in it that I found questionable. I liked the fact that [Will] was a good guy, a smart guy."

Arkin also felt that doing the film made sense from a business standpoint, and was told by his advisors this was going to be a very good project to be involved with. Admitting he's "not an expert" he said, "you don't have to be a rocket scientist to see that right now is a very good time to be involved



FULL MOON HIGH's Arkin returns to teen horror 18 years later on a bigger budget and gets better dressing accommodations.

with this genre." He has seen the original HALLOWEEN, and his reaction was, "It scared me." But he admitted to being "one of the few people on the planet" who has not seen the SCREAM movies.

Asked about the horror film convention of people having sex, then dying, Arkin refers to his and Curtis' characters: "One gets the sense that Jamie and I have probably had sex, so it stands to reason that somebody's going to get it. The motto is, 'If you have sex, you're going to pay for it in a terrible, terrible way.'"

Recalling an earlier movie role, Arkin said HALLOWEEN is his "first non-comedic horror film. The real horror for me of FULL MOON HIGH [1981] was in trying to get out of it. Larry Cohen wrote and directed

that film, and it was just amazing how much of a shoestring it was done on, and how bad people were treated, in general. I remember once, it was probably the low point of my career, I was changing wardrobe in a men's room at a Tad's Steak House on Fourteenth Street in New York—thinking, you know, 'This is not why I wanted to get into show business.'" Arkin noted how his career has advanced. "Nowadays, I change only in the finest restaurants."

Speaking of one of the elements that has kept HALLOWEEN and other genre films so popular, Arkin said he enjoys fear, but "I like it to be linked to something that involves a real challenge. I like driving a difficult road, doing something that requires pushing myself or encountering a risk or two. Risk that's controlled in order to be just frightening is not that interesting. But I drive a convertible in Los Angeles. Pretty high-risk."

Arkin has found it exciting to be working on HALLOWEEN, because of it being such a change from CHICAGO HOPE. He recalled a couple of times when an early call to shoot on one project would back into working late nights on the other show. "There haven't been any real red alerts," he said. "You muscle through [shooting long days]. The adrenaline of doing something other than the same show that we've been doing for the past four years is enough incentive to try and work it out." □

JOHN
CARPENTER

"When I made HALLOWEEN, there was no on-screen violence in the film because we can all understand what happens with a man and a knife."

Pleasance, other aspects of the film that have kept fans inspired are Carpenter's use of the relatively new Steadicam to get away from many of the restrictions of dolly moves, and his constraint in depicting gore. In an interview about his film IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS (*Cinefantastique*, October, 1994) Carpenter noted, "When I made HALLOWEEN, there was no on-screen violence at all in the film because we can all understand what happens with a man and a knife. You don't have to show it, there's no reason to show it."

Jamie Lee Curtis created a role that has made HALLOWEEN an enduring horror standard, with a global audience. She has been involved throughout the pre-production of the new 20th anniversary film also. "I won't say it's 'my idea' because then it just sounds so completely hokey," she said. "But it was completely my thought to come back and do this again. Nobody came to me to suggest it." Her character's death has supposedly been explained in HALLOWEEN: H2O as having been faked to save her life. She has taken on the name Keri Tate, and is now headmistress of a private high school. On location in a vintage suburb of L.A., Curtis noted there is a lot that reminds her of the first film, and the positive experience that was for her. Finishing a sequence of getting out of her car and walking along the small town street of "Langdon, Illinois" to a Halloween costume shop, she commented: "The movie has as much of a feel as the first movie. I was just thinking that. That movie was about walking down a street, and with the kids, and the way it was told with such simplicity, and

H2O

HALLOWEEN GODFATHER

Producer Moustapha Akkad on the green in gore.

By Douglas Eby

Moustapha Akkad, producer of the HALLOWEEN series, on location for the twentieth anniversary film, pointed out some of the reasons the series is different from other films of the genre, and has worked so well, is that the "monster" is a real person: "He's not a superhuman that goes through the walls and has ten eyes. And it could happen to anybody. They're being confined in a house, and you know someone is there. That's scary and everybody can relate to that. It's not some science fiction thing."

One of the working titles for Akkad's first HALLOWEEN was THE BABYSITTER MURDERS and he said the key to that film as well as the continuing popularity of sequels is the central figure of a babysitter, the role created by Jamie Lee Curtis: "The kids got hooked on it," Akkad said. "I can't believe the fans, and the mail we get. They know so much about it." As producer, he noted the popularity is "a blessing from on high. I love this guy Michael Myers. Every time someone has said, 'Why don't you kill him?' I say no. I love him." When the studio proposed making changes in the basic structure, he was emphatic: "No, you can't change. The key is in Michael Myers. But I was outvoted. So we did number three, which was a failure."

Akkad acknowledged that Curtis "started the idea" of doing a new HALLOWEEN, but gives credit also to Miramax: "Usually they don't do sequels. With their power of promotion and distribution, and being the twentieth anniversary, I thought



Akkad (inset) financed Carpenter's low-budget effort in 1979 and has kept the series alive in six sequels over the years, 1989's HALLOWEEN V (above). H2O is actually HALLOWEEN VII.

it's an ideal time to do it, and Jamie Lee thought so also, because of the anniversary." A number of ideas for a number seven in the series have come to him following HALLOWEEN VI: "Oh, tons" said Akkad. "Yes, we have been looking at scripts. Kevin Williamson's script really did it. And with Jamie Lee in it, the budget, director, production, everything was on a larger scale." Akkad admitted number six was a "disappointment" but thinks this one will be a re-invention.

Associate producing are Paul Freeman (TV series NORTH & SOUTH; RUBY AND OSWALD, plus HALLOWEEN IV and VI), and Moustapha's son Malek Akkad. A graduate of the University of Southern California Film School, the younger producer brings perspectives his father appreciates: "After all, our audience is kids. And he can communicate with the kids," said the elder Akkad. "He was with [the series] from number one. So he can give me lots of advice."

Akkad also agrees the success of the SCREAM movies makes his an even more likely film to get a good response. The casting is one of the aspects Akkad has been careful about over the years. Noted Akkad, "The thing about the story is that it's happening to real people. It's not [Dustin] Hoffman or

this or that, because people would look at it like a movie. So we've used unknowns so people could relate to it more. But Jamie Lee, fine, because she made number one." □



H2O

SEQUEL SCRIPTING

Matt Greenberg on doing preproduction rewrites.

By Douglas Eby

Before his screenwriting for HALLOWEEN: H2O, Matt Greenberg was an uncredited writer on MIMIC, a co-writer on PROPHECY II, and a number of other Miramax and Dimension projects, including ALLIED FORCES, which is in development. He noted that for HALLOWEEN, he was brought in "kind of late in the game" to do preproduction rewrites, working with Steve Miner, Jamie Lee Curtis and Miramax representatives "to punch up some of the scary parts and the dialogue. The real architect of the whole thing is Robert Zappia," he said. "And if you want anybody on your side in this kind of movie, it's Kevin Williamson. He comes up with just amazing stuff. He's a very sweet, gentle guy; success has not spoiled him."

Greenberg had seen all six of the HALLOWEEN films, and re-

Greenberg did work on the script by Robert Zappia, with input from SCREAM King Kevin Williamson.



George P. Wilbur as Michael Myers in 1989's HALLOWEEN IV with the late Donald Pleasance as Dr. Loomis, a fixture in all the sequels up to now.

called he was around 14 for the first one. "Going back and seeing it again, [you realize] it really was a seminal movie," he said. Curtis wanted to really deal in the sequel with what happens to Laurie, her character from the original. Noted Greenberg, "What really drew me to [the new one], when Bob Weinstein [of Miramax] asked me to work on it, was that I really liked the director, and that Jamie Lee Curtis was going to be involved. There are sequels that are made just for the sake of sequels, but this was one of those kind of sequels that just had to be made. If you look at the first HALLOWEEN, and even the second one, her story is never really finished. She's left this very traumatized young woman, and especially in the first one where her character is nicely drawn, you're left with images are of her just huddling in a corner, talking to Donald Pleasance, saying, 'Was

that the bogeyman?' In a lot of horror movies, especially sequels, they kill the beast and then it's like, forget the psychic trauma" he said, laughing. "But [being able to look at that] was a big draw to me. And Jamie brought a lot to the table in terms of story ideas, and emotional development of her character."

In college, Greenberg was a Medieval Studies major. "How I got involved in this is sort of weird," Greenberg said. "I've done a lot of horror stuff, and a lot of science fiction. I like the genre a lot. I've been trying to move toward historical films; the pendulum seems to be swinging that way, and I'm a very big history nut. But I love the genre a lot. When I was four years old, my dad made me watch THE BLOB, and that kind of got me hooked for life."

Asked if he enjoys what a lot of horror fans like about the movies: fear in a "safe" context,

Greenberg admitted he's had "extreme fear experiences" but noted, "I don't know if I seek them out. A lot of people say horror movies are a safe environment, but I don't know if I agree a hundred percent with that, because a really good horror movie does haunt you, and not in necessarily the most positive way. I still have nightmares about NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, and I saw that when I was 12."

Although he hasn't seen footage of H2O yet, Greenberg said he has friends at Miramax who have, and said, "They're extremely pleased. And they're not ones to mince words. If they don't like something they'll say it. To his credit, I think [director] Steve Miner knows his stuff. He's a good man to have at the helm."

Greenberg has great appreciation for the people he's been working with on H2O, and noted, "It's always nice to be taught humility, especially when you're working from a template like the first HALLOWEEN, and everyone said to look at that as a model, forget the sequels. I guess the biggest thing I got, was trying to learn from example. Someone like Newton said, 'If you can stand on the shoulders of giants...' that's sort of a grandiose thing to say, but when you set the bar this high for a horror movie, it really pushes you. And a lot of sequels don't, they just say, 'Yeah, just a few kills and the girl gets away...' and that's it. It actually did make me rethink a lot of things about horror films. If you push yourself, and really mine it, you can get a lot out of it." □

JAMIE LEE
CURTIS

“It’s timeless because being scared is timeless. Laurie Strode is the best part I’ve ever had, next to that of Helen in TRUE LIES.”

that’s exactly what this has. This scene is so reminiscent of the first movie.”

Curtis appreciates the core appeal of the series: “It’s timeless because being scared is timeless. You’ve established this predator, and he hasn’t gone away. But the basic thing about this woman, this Laurie Strode character, is it’s the best part I’ve ever had, next to Helen Tasker [TRUE LIES].” Curtis noted there are upgrades in the production values compared with the first film: “We have a significantly larger budget, but the whole movie’s going to be made for \$15 million. It’s not like it’s going to cost 35 million bucks. Fifteen million in today’s marketplace is probably three million then, so we’ve upped the ante a little.”

Curtis said she originally wanted John Carpenter back as director: “Not that Steve Miner wasn’t my complete choice, and has done a fabulous job. Obviously, John, Debra [Hill] and I talked about doing it, and they were both swamped with other things. I think John seriously considered it for a little while, and then didn’t have the time to give it the proper due. We all actually walked away from it, and then Miramax came back and said, ‘Look, we still want to make the movie even though John and Debra can’t really work it out. Do you?’ And I said, ‘Well, only if Kevin [Williamson] gets involved.’ Because, you know, he’s really the guy now, and I wanted his take on it. And he came on board and came up with the story, and picked the initial writer, Robert Zappia. And then as we were looking at directors, we went to obvious horror directors, and I

continued on page 125

H2O

JOSH HARTNETT

Teen horror as entry level to stardom.

By Douglas Eby

Speaking from the Texas location for his new film *THE FACULTY* (which also has the working title *FEELERS* for scripter Kevin Williamson and director Robert Rodriguez, Josh Hartnett noted parallels between his TV role on *CRACKER* and his *HALLOWEEN: H2O* role of John Tate (the only son of Keri Tate/Laurie Strode): “Both of them have been forced into independence by their parents, in different ways,” he said. “They’re both grownup for being seventeen. One of the things I thought about John was that he was a hopeless romantic, and a very secure person. He was a very responsible kid. He just wants it all to work, at all times. [CRACKER’s] Michael just wanted to get on with his life.” Hartnett said he can relate to both characters on a personal level: “I’ve felt either way many times in my life.”

Responding to a question about whether his character has to deal with any specific issues in the film, Hartnett said, “There’s one point where they do an illegal act, and John—jokingly, because he’s with his friends—said, ‘I can’t believe we’re doing this; this is insane.’ Larger social issues in the film aren’t really dealt with, except for being scared of death. That’s a big part of the movie.”

But *HALLOWEEN* does have the issue of alcoholism as a part of the story, like *CRACKER* did, where Hartnett’s character’s father was an



Hartnett, as Laurie Strode’s son John, with Michelle Williams, filming another Kevin Williamson horror vehicle, *THE FACULTY*.

alcoholic. Keri Tate drinks heavily to cope with the trauma of her past, and Hartnett feels it is an issue that is dealt with realistically: “The way my character sloughs it off at points, and also gets extremely bent out of shape over it, is very realistic,” he said. “When you’re around people who don’t really understand it, who don’t have those family situations, you don’t want to get too heavy with them about it. And then when you’re with the person [who’s drinking] you just want to rip the bottle out of their hand, and you want to scream at them for hours. It was well put in the movie.”

Hartnett is enthusiastic about the Robert Rodriguez film he just started, *THE FACULTY*, a horror film which is now referred to as “The Untitled Kevin

Williamson/Robert Rodriguez Project.” Noted Hartnett, “Everybody working on this project has got their idea of it down pat, and it’s really coming together with this great ensemble. It’s unbelievable so far. I’ve seen some clips that look fantastic. As far as the plot—it’s set in high school,” he broke off, with a laugh, not able to reveal much about it.

Before his casting in *CRACKER*, Hartnett had acted in a number of plays, and said he’d like to do more: “I’d love to do good, dramatic stage work off Broadway or other places. I did a little bit on ‘The Ciderhouse Rules’ with Ethan Hawke in rehearsal in rehearsal in L.A., but it never got into production because the scriptwriter decided to develop it for film. I love theater. The flow of theater is beautiful. That’s what makes movies such a challenge, it’s so cut up and it’s hard to define the character.”

But given that, Hartnett appreciates movies as a place to act: “There’s really nothing that can’t be done on film. I could do different takes [on *HALLOWEEN*], and create multiple ways this character would work. It’s so invigorating. That was the most exciting thing about being in the movie, and what I learned the most about, is that you just need to be relaxed and in there, and do it any possible way you can think of that would fit your character. On stage, you’re limited to one choice, and you stick with that.” □

UNIVERSAL SOLDIERS

Matt Battaglia stars in two follow-ups to the feature.

By Paul Wardle

It is the evening of December 23rd., 1997. Matt Battaglia has finished his final scenes for UNIVERSAL SOLDIER parts 2 and 3, and joins the cast and crew in downing a few beers after a job well done. Later, Battaglia disappears and many think he is in his trailer. Battaglia had already disseminated Christmas presents to various crew members along with costar Chandra West before he had even completed the day's shooting. The partyers would've understood if he had wanted to take a well-deserved rest from crowds. Yet at the point where several in attendance were ready to leave to have dinner at home, Battaglia returned with a large box full of McDonald's cheeseburgers. They never tasted so good.

Ending the forty-second day of shooting for Jeff Woolnough's sequels to the Jean-Claude Van Damme/Dolph Lundgren sci-fi/action flick, Matt Battaglia took time out after his last scene to be interviewed in his trailer at Downsview Military Base, in a northern suburb of Toronto. Battaglia played football with the Cleveland Browns and the Philadelphia Eagles, before an injury sidelined him. He turned to acting with encouragement from his lifelong friend, Burt Reynolds, who has a supporting role in UNIVERSAL SOLDIER II and III, and played college football with Matt's father.

Making the transition from pro-football linebacker to actor in such films as DROP DEAD, RAVEN and TV appearances on DAYS OF OUR LIVES, FRIENDS and EVENING SHADE, must not have been an



Filming UNIVERSAL SOLDIER II in Toronto.

easy one. Born in Tallahassee, Fla., Battaglia grew up in the Atlanta suburbs of Tucker and Lithonia and won a football scholarship to the University of Louisville in Kentucky. Graduating to pro ball with the Browns and the Eagles, his promising career was cut short, but replaced with a promising acting career.

"My career in the NFL ended abruptly," Battaglia said, owing to a shoulder injury. "I was trying to decide what I wanted to do next. I had a marketing degree in college and a real estate license, but I realized that I didn't handle authority very well, and I enjoyed being in the spotlight. I think I kind of decided to act for the wrong reasons. But once I discovered the art and the craft of acting, I truly fell in love with it. No matter what I'm making financially, it was something that I wanted to do for a living."

Ironically, for a guy who has trouble with authority, his character in UNIVERSAL SOLDIER II and III is a super soldier who would've become a mindless killing machine if he hadn't broken away from the authority figures in the military who were controlling him. Battaglia is a rather imposing figure; not in a threatening way, but he is very tall, broadshouldered and muscular with chiseled, heroic features. Just the sort to step into the macho shoes of Jean-Claude Van-Damme. Still, it must have been intimidating to have to live up to the expectations



Football player-turned actor Battaglia with Chandra West as reporter friend and ally Veronica.



Matt Battaglia as Luc takes over the franchise from Jean-Claude Van Damme in pilots for a potential series.

of genre action fans who will compare him to the Belgian juggernaut.

"I wouldn't say intimidating," Battaglia replied, "because that's one emotion I don't feel very often, but I will say I was aware of how the critics or the audience might respond. In my opinion, for Jean-Claude Van Damme, it's the best movie he's done. However, he was already an established star before doing that movie. For sure, my name is not what his name was when he filmed the first *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER*. So, I think the first thing I questioned was 'Will the audience accept me as Luc in the sequels?' Then, when I started reading the script and saw what they were doing, one thing we have that wasn't in the first movie was the relationship between the reporter and the soldier. We have more of that, and we also have a lot of comedy in this one.

And will there be any differences in the action-adventure/sci-fi content of the sequels compared to the original? "We have less martial arts in the sequels, which is what Jean-Claude is known for," Battaglia explained, "but they could have hired any martial arts [expert]. Luckily for me they chose to find somebody new who could act as well as do

the physical stuff."

One would expect that to be able to pull off the constant physical activity, fight scenes and special feats inherent in this type of movie-making, Battaglia would have to warm up for the shooting with extensive physical training, but any interviewer interested in a detailed description of his workout regimen will be sorely disappointed.

"No, believe it or not, I'm kind of a genetic freak. Nobody's going to believe when they read this in your magazine, but I don't work out. Most people don't believe me except the people who are around me, who see that I don't go to the gym. It's been

His memory wiped clean, Luc rejoins the super soldiers of UniSol (Desmond Campbell and Kevin Ruston), reanimated corpses of Vietnam casualties.



“I think I decided to act for the wrong reasons. But once I discovered the art and craft of acting, I truly fell in love with it.”

—Actor Matt Battaglia—

seven years since I've worked out with weights. Then again, I used to be so much bigger when I played football—I've lost 55 pounds. Luckily, I can eat and drink whatever I want and stay in the same shape. I can't figure it out. Nobody can."

I can hear flabby, hollow-chested guys tearing their hair out as they read that last paragraph, but there's no way of telling what will happen to this mutant metabolism when Matt's in his 50s or 60s. Regardless, he has truly made some remarkable leaps in his post college career goals.

He also did many of his own stunts on this production. "There was only one stunt that they wouldn't let me do," he explained. "And that was to go into a plate glass window. I broke a glass window with my hand, but I couldn't go through the window itself; the big one; it's a seven-foot window and they can't make candy glass; it's too big. They've got to do it with tempered glass, and it was too early in the movie. They were afraid if I fell back or any glass hit me in the face, that would be it. They wouldn't be able to [go on with the shoot]. But I did a stunt where I slid down a chain, probably a 30-foot slide down this chain. I ripped my finger open there and I have more scars on my body from this two months of shooting than I have had in my whole life up to this point.

Everyone from the publicists to the grips and assistant directors liked Battaglia and found him enjoyable to work with. Assistant director Kelly Shinfield praised his work ethic on the set. "Matt worked hard to make sure that nobody was being mistreated—that everybody was happy."

Battaglia has a drive and ambition which infects his work and his attitude to a great degree. He is a dynamo. "I fought them on every stunt," he said. "I wanted to do all the stunts that I could, and we went back and forth on that plate glass window shot for two weeks. I kept saying I was doing it, and they kept saying, 'No you're not!' Eventually I realized it wasn't the smart thing to do. I'm an ath-

lete, and for production values, it's so much better if I can do the stunts myself. It's not like I can't physically handle the jumps."

Despite the considerable danger in this film, the presence of Battaglia's old friend, Burt Reynolds clearly had a positive effect on him. "Burt and I have been friends for a long time," said Battaglia, "We've worked together quite a bit. It's nice to work with someone you get along with. He came here as a favor to me. He's an icon. The guy's making another comeback. He had a slow spell and then he did EVENING



Battaglia as Luc, freed from UniSol control, fighting an army of super soldiers for freedom in *BROTHERS IN ARMS*, to air on Showtime in September.

SHADE. Then things went down and now he has *BOOGIE NIGHTS*. He is truly a dinosaur that just won't give up. They keep tryin' to kill him; he keeps comin' back. He was on the set for a week; the crew loved him; every crew loves Burt Reynolds. He's very entertaining, very approachable, very friendly, very giving. He's giving not only on a financial level with gifts; he'll also give advice."

Battaglia tells of a shopping spree during which he and Reynolds went to the World's Biggest Bookstore in Toronto, and Reynolds spent over a thousand dollars in an hour and a half. Matt has obvious admiration for him, describing Reynolds as his acting mentor. This is apropos, because the character he plays in both sequels is named Mentor, though the character in question is much less helpful to Luc than the real Burt Reynolds has been to Battaglia.

Recalling his transition from linebacker to actor, Battaglia again credited Reynolds for his help and encouragement. "I ran into Burt at a Florida state football game. He and Loni were married at the time. I was playing with the Philadelphia Eagles, and he said,

'Wow! You've got a great look. You should get into acting.' I thought they were just being complimentary, and at that time football was my life. Then, when things changed because of my injury, I went to acting school, moved to L.A., auditioned for *EVENING SHADE* and got a recurring role in that while I was out there. Then, I starred in an action picture with him last year, called *RAVEN*. I showed up on the set the day we were starting and I told everybody to keep quiet, because he didn't know who his co-star was. He walked in the trailer and asked, 'What are you doing here?' So, that was nice that we got to work together. I had just spent six years in acting school and I was completely green. It was a great personal accomplishment for me to be starring opposite him. And in this movie, to be billed above Burt, it just goes to show you that Burt [is very generous]. As a favor to me, he was willing to do this. He saw this as a big opportunity in my career and wanted to be part of it."

However, this warm feeling did not extend to the show's other celebrity guest-star, Gary Busey. When asked about working

with Busey, Battaglia's non-committal reply was, "I will very diplomatically say that he's gonna have great product on the screen. I enjoyed working with Burt Reynolds a lot more than Gary Busey. That's politically correct."

He and others all agree that the atmosphere on the set of *UNIVERSAL SOLDIER II: BROTHERS IN ARMS*; and part III: *UNFINISHED BUSINESS* was jovial and positive. If Battaglia has learned anything from his mentor and others he has met along the way, it's to infuse the work environment with a healthy attitude.

Noted Battaglia, "A very wise person who's very established in this industry once told me that as long as the executive producers, the director and the stars of the movie are not assholes, then nobody else has a license to be; but the second you allow one of those people to be a prick, then it gives license to the entire crew and it grows like a cancer. In this film nobody came in with an attitude, and as my career continues, that is the one thing I will never stand for. I have a responsibility to myself to enjoy what I do for a living as well as a responsibility to the crew. Being the lead, you have as much pull as the executive producer, and I'll use it [if I think something's not right]. We're doing something that other people would kill to do and we're blessed with being able to do it.

The least we can do is enjoy our work, and anybody who stands in the way of the enjoyment of a hundred crew members is not going to be around long; at least not where I am."

And clearly, from everything that was said by Battaglia and the others, it is evident that no one did disrupt the positive atmosphere. "On this set, it was great." Battaglia continued. "I can truly say that it was the best crew I ever worked with; the friendliest and most fun, though we worked long hours and at times it was tiring."

Not only was it tiring, but the weather in Toronto is always a factor on outdoor shots. In October and November, Toronto weather is even more unpredictable than usual. There are extremes that cannot be believed if one has not lived here. You can go from temperatures in the high 80s in September and high 70s in October to days when there is frost on the ground only a few weeks later. A particularly nasty snow storm hit the area in early November, only a couple of weeks after people had been sunning themselves. To have to shoot outdoor scenes in weather like this must have been unpleasant to say

“As a former football player, you learn to flip a switch, from rage to being a normal person again. I can turn that on and off.”

—Actor Matt Battaglia—

the least.

“We had four different days where we were shooting fight scenes all day long,” Battaglia explained. “I was out there in a T-shirt and jeans for eight hours straight. Because I had fake blood and sweat [applied to my body], I could not keep putting on a jacket. So I was extremely cold. Also, as a former football player, you learn to flip a switch, from rage to being a normal person again. I can turn that on and off. That stuff comes from the eyes; it’s very instinctual. The camera’s going to be on your face, and you have to have a look inside of you as if this antagonist is hurting your family—that’s what I think of [to get into that mindset]. But that kind of intensity gets tiring after you do it for seven or eight hours. I was completely drained by the end of the day. It’s a mental drain as well as a physical drain from the fights themselves. And once I get older and can’t handle the stunts as well, that might get tiring.”

Battaglia doesn’t seem too concerned, and appears as if physical limitations will not be a factor for a long time. Yet these hardships prove that while, as he said, most people would “kill to do” action films and attain fame and fortune, it’s hard work, like any other big-profile job. Very few people would be physically capable of pulling it off. This man definitely earns his pay.

There is also the confusion of filming two sequels at once. As Battaglia remembered: “We could be shooting the middle of the second movie in the morning, and then after lunch, a scene from the beginning of the first movie. So, you have to know where you’re at, so you know what you’ve gone through emotionally, how my character is developed [at that point], because my character is continuously developing. At the beginning of the first movie, I am still almost robotic. I haven’t yet become human-like at all. I have no memory; I’m on kill mode. It was, without a doubt, the most difficult experience I’ve had as an actor.”

Kevin Gillis, executive producer on the project, was enthusiastic when he discussed the casting of Battaglia for the part.



Director Jeff Woolnough rehearses Battaglia and West during filming in Toronto, shooting two movies back-to-back. The second sequel, UNFINISHED BUSINESS, is tentatively set to air on Showtime in October.

As he said, “I think Matt has created a Luc that is absolutely endearing! I see it from both males and females who watch the dailies, who look at this guy perform on screen. We were looking at a number of different name actors and I knew who he was; I’d certainly heard of him, and he showed up at our office in Los Angeles. He said he wanted to read for the part. He came in, and did a read-through in a T-shirt and they sent the tape up to me and I saw it and sent it to Showtime right away. I got a call back saying that ‘there are fourteen secretaries here who say you’ve got to hire this guy.’ The read-through was not about a powerhouse guy. He picked the scene that was the most vulnerable; the most emotionally captivating and it was just done with a little handheld camera, played on a little VCR, but his talent came right through. He won the part by winning hearts.”

The first sequel to UNIVERSAL SOLDIER, BROTHERS IN ARMS will premier on Showtime in September of 1998, according to Gillis. The third, UNFINISHED BUSINESS, will likely follow in the Octo-

ber. As for future roles Battaglia would like to play, he had this to say: “Someday I definitely want to play a guy with cerebral palsy. I want to really show my chops, and I believe I can pull that off. It’s something that I did in a scene class and I connected with it. I used to have a very bad speech impediment myself, and I guess whether it’s a mentally retarded person or somebody with any physical or mental handicap, somehow I can relate to them.”

To hear Battaglia speak in a clear, deep stage actor’s voice, it is hard to believe he once had such a problem. Yet James Earl Jones had a stutter. “I got hired once for a voiceover job, and I thought, ‘Wow. How ironic to be hired just for my voice when people used to criticize it.’”

The intensity with which Battaglia speaks about his work shows a depth and artistic side that mingles with the ex-football player turned action hero persona. Though he claims he has no plans to stay in the action genre, preferring to seek out meatier roles, the ultimate success of this current project depends on the screen presence and likability of Battaglia’s performance. If it goes over the

way Kevin Gillis and others think it will, it may be difficult to turn down a recurring role that could rock him to stardom the way Xena did for Lucy Lawless. Whatever the outcome, you get the distinct feeling that big things are in store for Matt Battaglia. He expresses interest in one day doing a civil war epic, and is working on screenplays of his own which he would like to have produced “to have a positive impact on the world.” □

Battaglia and Burt Reynolds as Mentor, the sinister military chief who seeks to keep the UniSol program alive, Battaglia’s true-life mentor and friend.



TALOS THE MUMMY

Director Russell Mulcahy's high-tech Egyptian shocker.

By Alan Jones

Director Russell Mulcahy calls it his "Favor Film." But everyone else is calling it "SEVEN meets THE MUMMY." The SHADOW director also co-produced and co-wrote TALOS, THE MUMMY, a \$10 million horror fantasy, which represents the biggest gamble of Mulcahy's career.

Mulcahy co-wrote the film with Keith Williams, a friend and collaborator during the early exciting days of the rock video industry where Mulcahy made his name. They worked together on numerous seminal clips featuring Ultravox, Spandau Ballet, Fleetwood Mac and ELO and their mutual love of the fantasy genre has kept their friendship buoyant over the years.

The film was conceived as a diversion during Christmas 1995 while Mulcahy convalesced with a broken leg from skiing. Noted Williams, "Russell in a wheelchair is not a pleasant thing to deal with! I know how restless he can be at the best of times. So to stop him tormenting everyone through boredom I suggested we write something together as a kind of therapy. He said,



Mulcahy, horror auteur, directing his long-cherished horror project, dubbed "SEVEN meets THE MUMMY," for Cine Grande Entertainment.

'What?' I said, 'Well, what's your favorite fantasy film ever?' And he said, 'Hammer's THE MUMMY from 1959.'

Hammer's THE MUMMY had indeed made a huge impact on Mulcahy. He recalled, "I can remember when I was a kid in Australia looking up at the poster in awe. That and the Ray Harryhausen pictures made me want to make movies. That's why my production company is called Seventh Voyage after THE SEV-

ENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD. And the Mummy is called Talos after the giant bronze statue that pursues Jason in JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS. However, the one thing that really annoyed me when I actually saw THE MUMMY is you never get any scene where a ray of light goes through its torso as depicted on the poster. In the movie Peter Cushing's John Banning sticks a spear through Christopher Lee's Kharis, which isn't the same thing at all. TALOS, THE MUMMY is being made so we can put right what we felt cheated by nearly 40 years ago!"

Rather than rehash old mummy lore, Mulcahy and Williams came up with the concept of the mummy wrappings being the evil force, able to transform themselves into a variety of horrific guises. "When you see this pile of rags I want you to get the chills," said Mulcahy.

However, the original screenplay Williams wrote based on all of his and Mulcahy's collective themes was promptly rejected by everyone when it was sent out on the studio level. Williams remarked, "It worked out that I constructed the storyline and concept while Russell provided





RUSSELL MULCAHY, DIRECTOR

“I remember when I was a kid in Australia looking up at the poster of Hammer’s THE MUMMY in awe. That and the Ray Harryhausen pictures made me want to make movies.”

the action set pieces. The two melded together and it was a perfect collaboration. I subsequently found out that the idea of the bandages coming alive freaked out the studio executives somewhat. It was too different from what they expected a Mummy movie to be about.”

But Mulcahy wasn’t going to let any such hiccup stand in the way of TALOS, THE MUMMY becoming a reality. His enthusiasm was so fired by the project that he decided to pitch it to Daniel Sladek and Silvio Muraglia, the producers of SILENT TRIGGER, the action mystery starring Dolph Lundgren he had just completed for their Cine Grande Entertainment company.

Noted Sladek, “Our company is strictly in the action adventure arena with such titles as HIDDEN ASSASSIN and SUB DOWN and I’d be the first to admit that Silvio and I know nothing about horror. While we liked the TALOS script and thought it was clever and fun, we didn’t want to walk blindfolded into a world we’d never played in before. It was easy for us to commit to Russell because working

with him is such a blast. But I wanted to get an expert opinion on the script so I called my old school friend, Howard Berger, and asked his advice.”

While Berger of the KNB Effects Group, the outfit responsible for the special effects in SPAWN, MEN IN BLACK and SCREAM, reacted very positively to the script, he did think it needed work and suggested a friend of his, John Esposito, should be called in to write another draft of the screenplay incorporating what everyone felt was missing from the basic concept. Esposito, who wrote Stephen King’s GRAVEYARD SHIFT and co-wrote FROM DUSK TILL DAWN, explained, “I’ve always wanted to write a Mummy movie but frankly thought I’d never get the chance. When I read the first TALOS, THE MUMMY screenplay I saw some things I could improve and happily, Russell, who turned out to be the sort of person I hoped he would be, loved my ideas.”

Esposito added the lead character of Riley, the American Interpol detective called in to investigate the gruesome murders linked to the discovery of a

Mulcahy’s Mummy, 7’4” Roger Morrissey, makeup by KNB Efx. Below: Jack Davenport, Louise Lombard and Sean Pertwee discover the tomb of Talos.



JOHN ESPOSITO, SCREENWRITER

“I figured the Mummy as a movie monster hadn’t been exploited for a while, so why not be as radical as possible? I believe we’ve revolutionized the Mummy genre.”

cept of what was actually in the film. So Russell and I would storyboard every day and then send the drawings over to John who would try and incorporate those descriptions in his script.”

However, at first, Berger didn’t get Mulcahy’s basic idea about the Mummy’s wrappings being the monster. “Russell was dead set on that idea and I wasn’t convinced at all,” said Berger. “I kept trying to talk him out of it as I couldn’t see where it fit into what I thought was an homage to Hammer and the classic Universal monster movies. It took two more rewrites of the screenplay before I finally grasped the concept. Okay, I understand, the gag is the bandages are the essence of evil and they can change shape and make up any form including the humanoid one. Now that’s scary.”

It took Esposito three weeks to write the new screenplay, including a visit to the British Museum in London to fuel his

creative juices. “I got a lot of inspiration from that trip and went darker in the story than I think Russell was anticipating,” said Esposito. “I figured the Mummy as a movie monster hadn’t been exploited for a while—hence the current crop of cash-ins—so why not be as radical as possible? When you are dealing with reincarnation, archaeologists and Mummy wrappings, you might just as well ring as many changes as you possibly can. Sure, it’s tough to ring those changes and stay within the constraints of what a Mummy movie is supposed to offer. Yet I believe we have our cake and manage to eat it too by revolutionizing the Mummy genre in highly enjoyable ways.”

TALOS, THE MUMMY began its 37-day shoot on September 3, 1997, in Luxembourg with a star-laden cast including Jason Scott Lee (DRAGON), popular British TV actress Louise Lombard, Sean Pertwee (EVENT HORIZON), Lysette

Mulcahy’s concept was the Mummy wrappings come to life, CGI by Flash Film Works which duplicated the poster of Hammer’s 1959 horror.

should be. The opening, for example, is the classic archaeological dig scene in which Christopher Lee appears and the audience says, Okay, this is what I paid to see. But while every single cliché is set up—like the reincarnated princess—and I fully expect groans at some of the more obvious ones, they are then twisted enough to lead you down a path to an ending nobody will be anticipating.”

Based on Esposito’s screenplay, Berger had meetings with Mulcahy and decided to storyboard the key special effects sequences. “We completely jumped the gun as the movie hadn’t been green-lit or anything,” he said. “But I knew it would eventually be a go project and I wanted to get a head start because I was certain as soon as it did we’d already be out of time. And we were! I wanted to make sure everything was cool and we all had a con-

3000-year-old tomb found in Egypt. “Everyone in the story seemed to believe in the fantasy elements and I wanted one person who didn’t,” said Esposito. “Riley basically became the audience, the debunker who had a rational explanation for everything. There’s stuff in the script that an audience expects from a Mummy movie too, as there

Psychic Shelley Duvall levitates Talos victim Sean Pertwee in a seance to divine the mummy’s whereabouts. Right: The wrappings menace Michael Lerner.



Anthony (DR. JEKYLL AND MS. HYDE), Michael Lerner (GODZILLA), Honor Blackman (GOLDFINGER), Shelley Duvall (THE SHINING), John Polito (HIGHLANDER) and Christopher Lee. Jason Scott Lee dropped his usual hefty fee to star as Riley because “I don’t work for money,” he said. “I work with people I respect and admire. Russell and I got on extremely well when we did an episode of the TV series THE



THE MUMMY

CHRISTOPHER LEE

The legendary Hammer horror star on his Mummy comeback at age 75, minus all those wrappings.

By Alan Jones

Russell Mulcahy's TALOS THE MUMMY is Christopher Lee's 255th credit according to the legendary Hammer star's own calculations. During the last fifty of his own 75 years, Lee has appeared in movies of every genre in twelve different countries, and the undisputed highlights of his long and varied career are THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE THREE MUSKETEERS, THE WICKER MAN and working with directors Steven Spielberg (1941) and Joe Dante (GREMLINS 2). But it's mainly for his memorable portrayals of Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, Rasputin, the Duc de Richleau, Sherlock Holmes and Fu Manchu that the veteran actor retains a firm grip on every fantasy fan's affections. And for playing Khari, the Mummy, in Hammer's 1959 reworking of the bandaged monster from Universal's classic horror heyday.

"Obviously I'll never forget that film," said the ever-distinguished Lee after arriving on the Luxembourg set of TALOS THE MUMMY to play the role of famed archaeologist Sir Richard Turkel in the all-important 1948 prologue. "It's a long time ago now, but as people ask me questions about it on this film memories do come flooding back. I remember it mainly because it was one of the toughest films I've ever had to make in my career from a physical point of view. I had to summon up strength I didn't even know I had! I dislocated my shoulder and could barely breathe in the wrappings. But you manage to do it somehow when 'Action' is called and the adrenaline starts to flow."

He continued, "I had to smash through windows and doors, pick up [co-star]



Lee as famed archaeologist Sir Richard Turkel in the film's 1948 prologue, a return to form after starring in Hammer's 1959 THE MUMMY.

Yvonne Furneaux and carry her in my arms. She couldn't put her own arms around my neck because she was supposed to be unconscious and it was tremendously hard to walk 87 yards with such a dead weight. Yet it really was a beautiful-looking film, probably one of the most beautiful Hammer ever made. Sadly, as is the case when one gets older, many of the people who appeared in it are no longer with us. Peter [Cushing], of course, George Pastell who played Mehemet, the High Priest. Eddie Byrne [In-

spector Mulrooney] I saw last year though. THE MUMMY was a very effective and entertaining film."

It was because Lee did suffer so much physical hardship that Hammer saw the sense of casting stunt men rather than actors in their subsequent Egyptian epics THE CURSE OF THE MUMMY'S TOMB and THE MUMMY'S SHROUD. So it was with very raised eyebrows that Lee greeted the TALOS THE MUMMY offer from director Russell Mulcahy. "My first reaction to the offer when I heard it was a Mummy movie was, 'Well, I won't be able to do it at my age,'" laughed Lee. "No more bandages for me, I must accept my limitations. But then Russell came to London to meet me and explained the story in detail and told me all about the part he wanted me to play. The Talos story is very different to The Mummy as here the actual bandages are searching for different elements from people in order to properly come alive again. I didn't speak either in the Hammer film apart from saying prayers in the ancient Egyptian flashbacks. Turkel is the leader of an English expedition to the Valley of the Kings searching for buried treasure who comes across the sealed entrance to an underground tomb. He has quite a lot of dialogue as a result of translating hieroglyphics."

Mulcahy actively sought Lee's participation in TALOS THE MUMMY primarily because Hammer's THE MUMMY is his favorite fantasy film ever and he absolutely adores the star's work. Lee remarked, "Having the captain of the ship immediately on your side is a great help. He's so encouraging, too, which is something you don't often find these days. Russell is clearly a man of great technical skill who has a true appreciation of actors," continued Lee.

"The whole unit absolutely loves him because the confidence he exudes on the studio floor earns him their respect. Even when you make a mistake, it's okay. Let's do it again, he says with ease. And that doesn't always happen, I can tell you. I've worked with enough aggressive tyrants who call themselves directors to know the difference! But Russell's attitude to the work lifts everyone around him and you feel so much better for that. Especially if it's a complicated shot. Naturally, you hope you aren't going to disappoint him as people can expect too much sometimes. Russell is the sort of director who never lets you think you are being asked to redo a take because you blew it. It's always because of safety reasons, or his fault, and that's wonderfully professional."

Prior to *TALOS THE MUMMY* Lee spent three months in Pakistan starring in *JINNAH* as the founder of that nation, Mohammed Ali Jinnah. "But I'm only doing three days on *TALOS THE MUMMY*," said Lee. "As far as I'm concerned, it's a simple matter of what's the story, what's the script like, what's the point of me doing it, is it worth playing and can I make a contribution? On the basis of answering those questions I accept or refuse a part no matter the length of time I'd be spending on the shoot. I thought *TALOS THE MUMMY* told a very entertaining story. I suppose some would label it a horror film. I would personally call it a science fiction fantasy. If it can be termed a horror film, then it's the first one I've made in 26 years."

Who's in the cast is another major aspect Lee bases his acting choices on. "Of course, the cast elevates it and look at the marvelous people in this. Shelley Duvall, with whom I did a *FAIRY TALE THEATRE*, Jason Scott Lee, Honor Blackman, Michael Lerner—an A list cast right down the line. Again it's a case of how much people care, not what they're getting paid. Many of the cast members want to be in the film because it's being directed by Russell and they know what a skillful craftsman he is. If Russell was a different type of director to the one he is, one who wasn't particularly interested in the subject matter, I would have said no to appearing as Turkel. The fact that he so loves my past work is alarming in some ways. I'm grateful he has these

CHRISTOPHER LEE, ACTOR

"Most casting directors don't know what I've done the last 20 years. I've spent my career proving people wrong. I'm not typecast. The proof's been on the screen for many years."



Lee as Turkel gets a *FORREST GUMP*-like death scene in the desert, the result of lethal gases from the mummy's tomb, CGI by William Mesa's Flash Film Works.



feelings, but one does have to retain a sense of humility."

Nevertheless, Lee knows how important he has been in the lives of so many filmmakers currently in positions of industry power. This enduring legacy was quite apparent the day he brought the entire *TALOS THE MUMMY* production to a halt with his arrival on the Luxembourg studio floor for the first time. From Mulcahy

and KNB special effects man Howard Berger, to story writer Keith Williams and co-writer John Esposito, everyone just stood and stared in amazement at the icon from their youth actually standing in the flesh before them. It was a key moment for the numerous fantasy fans involved in the movie.

"I wish more casting directors were my fans, especially in Britain," said Lee dryly. "Most of them don't know what I've done in the last 20 years, and certainly not in the last ten years in America. It seems I've spent my entire professional career proving people wrong. Lee only does this, or that. But, the audience says, we saw him in this, and that in Germany, Japan, France, you name it. Too many casting directors these days don't do their homework. Nor do they see beyond the conventional. I played a gay Hells Angel in *SERIAL* with Tuesday Weld, but do you think a British casting director would have thought of me for that role despite the fact I

haven't played a horror character in years? I refuse to fight being pigeon-holed. I'm not typecast at all and the proof has been on the screen for many years. All movies should be cast in the way *TALOS THE MUMMY* was: by a director who knows what's going on in the real world."

Unsurprisingly, because he has developed such an international career, it isn't the first time Lee has been on location in Luxembourg. "I made one of the first movies to take advantage of the tax arrangements in this country," he said. "It was *SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE LEADING LADY*, all about anarchists trying to assassinate the Empress of Austria. Patrick Macnee was Watson to my Holmes and Morgan Fairchild was Irene Adler. Macnee and I were on the stage together at the age of ten in a school Shakespeare production. It was one of those three hour TV films. I've found Luxembourg a very pleasant place to work in with splendid crews."

Apart from *JINNAH*, Lee has recently appeared in *THE ODYSSEY* miniseries, the BBC television production of *IVANHOE* and in Justin Hardy's little-seen *A FEAST AT MIDNIGHT*. In that delightfully sly suspense comedy, Lee plays the Latin house master at an English boarding school, nicknamed Raptor, who tries to keep an eye on his aspiring chief pupils. Lee said, "That was a wonderful part for me but the film never got decent distribution. The best part I've ever played was Lord Summerisle in Robin Hardy's *THE WICKER MAN* for which I was paid nothing. Justin was his son and I didn't get paid anything for *A FEAST AT MIDNIGHT* either. I told them I couldn't go on working for members of the Hardy family for nothing!"

Clearly Lee has no intention of retiring. He said, "Sometimes I feel like it, frankly, but the strange thing is I'm being offered more work now than I ever have been in my entire career. I turn down most of it because I just don't find it interesting and I have to pace myself now. I have to accept the fact that I get tired easily and it wouldn't be fair to take on too much. But I don't intend to retire because of all the exciting things I'm still being asked to do, although it is hard to find something I haven't done before. I've played every major character in fiction it seems to me. But I'd never play a Mummy again. Once was more than enough. Roger Morrissey, the stunt man playing Talos in some scenes, is 7 feet 4 inches—over a foot taller than what I was in 1959—and he can obviously do a lot more than even I could back then." □



Jason Scott Lee stars as Riley, an American Interpol detective, in Mulcahy's \$10 million horror film, currently shopping for a U.S. distribution deal.

HUNGER together and, as I liked the story he had pieced together, I lent my name to the project to give it any help I could. Russell has a real talent to make people jump and I like that quality. Here I have a real hero image backed up by a great story that takes ancient history and brings it slam-bang up to date."

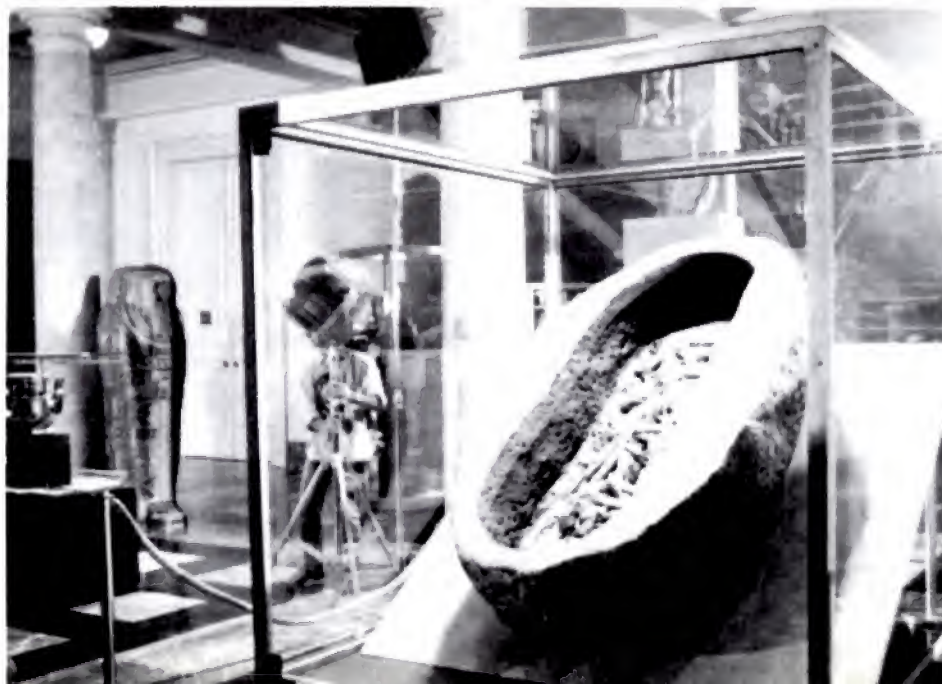
The Carousel Picture Company, owned by Tom Reeve and Romain Schroeder, is the fourth part of the TALOS, THE MUMMY production package with Cine Grande Entertainment, Seventh Voyage and the KNB Effects Group. Co-producer Silvio Muraglia said, "We made our last film SUB DOWN in Luxembourg and we really like it here. We believe we're establishing a house label with our movies—ones with keen marketing potential in America but with a Euro sensibility. There are tax advantages to working in Luxembourg, naturally, but because it is such a small country with an equally small film industry, it means you can bring in your own people from wherever you want. That's the geographical advantage. There's very little bureaucracy here which is conducive for business and the city itself is very adaptable for other locations. It can be London, Paris, Rome and even America."

Muraglia continued, "To be honest, I was a little dubious about our involvement in TALOS, THE MUMMY at first. But Daniel was persistent and made me see above the fantasy elements. Russell is the key to

this picture in my mind. He has an original and passionate vision so I trust him to deliver a horror movie with the required mainstream scares. Yet he's also a genius stylist and that's the next level up for attracting another more aesthetic audience. If TALOS was being directed by anybody else I wouldn't be involved."

Nor would production designer Bryce Walmsley or director of photography Gabriel Beristain. Award-winning Walmsley, who designed Mulcahy's feature debut RAZORBACK as well as a number of his rock videos, said, "I'm doing this for Russell because I love him. I seem to have known him for a hundred years, and he doesn't do boring projects. It's been a hard film to make because Luxembourg doesn't have any prop houses and every inch of the frame has had to be filled with detail and interest. I've also had to design a lot of the sets so they can easily be recycled.

The possessed Talos bandages in the British museum, which can morph into any shape in Mulcahy's intriguing high-tech Mummy-less Mummy concept.



Most fun to do was the pyramid-shaped hotel set for the finale as it was a composite of levels, drains, tunnels and gantries. The central core became the torture chamber for the ancient Egyptian flashbacks."

Like writer John Esposito, Walmsley also went to the British Museum for research purposes and that helped enormously in visualizing one of the more unusual TALOS designs. "Russell wanted the sarcophagus to be circular rather than the usually regular square shape," he explained. "He always saw the shape as one roughly hewn out of rock in a hurry so they could bury this evil magician fast. He also liked the idea of the sarcophagus hanging in space. But that begged the question what would it be hanging from exactly? A rope would perish in 3000 years, and it couldn't be a man-made fibre, so it would have to be from a chain. The rationales you have to go through in a film like this! In the end I asked Dick Budden, one of legendary sculptor Henry Moore's technicians, to sculpt the piece from the fuzzy faxes we'd send over with our sudden collective flashes of inspiration."

Gabriel Beristain, the cinematographer responsible for DOLORES CLAIBORNE, is the man Mulcahy asked to provide an equally scintillating look for TALOS, THE MUMMY. Noted Beristain, "We wanted to break away from the conventional dusty look of Mummy movies and tell the story with colors. The plan is to establish a cozily safe world of technology through modern bright neon colors and then dis-



Keith Williams, who conceived and co-wrote the film with Mulcahy, gets his reward on set.

turb that with neutral colors when the esoteric, magic and mystical happenings occur. Colors really can change the mood and Space Age futurism contrasted with ancient monochromatic is an interesting palette to manipulate."

Noted Mulcahy, "Gabriel's contribution has been very important. He's pulled out magic with his light and shade genius and I never want to work with anyone else. But then everyone is being great on this movie and rallying around in ways I find so very touching. No one is getting their normal fee and TALOS, THE MUMMY is being made because these artists and craftsman believe in me and the script. When Christopher Lee brought all those words to life in the 1948 flashbacks I became so emotional I nearly broke down. It's a total dream come true. With TALOS, THE MUMMY I've made a neo-Hammer Mummy film starring my absolute idol Christopher Lee and I've cut him in half in what will be a show-stopping death scene. It really doesn't get any better than this." □

TALOS

MAKEUP EFFECTS

Turn to page 22.

THE MUMMY

MAKE-UP EFFECTS

The KNB Efx Group take a co-producing role to shape the script as well as the horror pyrotechnics.

By Alan Jones

Howard Berger, the B in the KNB Effects Group, responsible for the effects in *SPAWN*, *SCREAM*, *MARS ATTACKS* and *ARMY OF DARKNESS* to name just the tip of the iceberg, is not only the special effects supervisor for *TALOS THE MUMMY*—he is also an associate producer and the second unit director. Berger joked, “Before *TALOS* we did a Disney cable Mummy movie titled *UNDER WRAPS* which is more in the comedy vein and we’re about to start pre-production on Stephen [RUDYARD KIPPLING’S *THE JUNGLE BOOK*] Sommers’ *THE MUMMY* for a mid-1998 start date. You could say KNB are Mummy’s boys at the moment!”

But Berger’s total involvement in *TALOS THE MUMMY* is due mainly to the fact that he and producer Daniel Sladek are childhood friends. “I’ve known Daniel since he was 14 years old,” said Berger. “We used to go to camp together and talked constantly about making movies. I did some special effects consulting work for him on Cine Grande Entertainment’s last production, the action adventure *SUB DOWN*, and I told him then that as payment I wanted us to do a film together.”

Cut to a short time later when Sladek asked Berger to read the first draft screenplay of *TALOS THE MUMMY*. “Naturally, I was interested because Russell Mulcahy was creatively attached to the project,” said Berger. “We’d already done a



Second unit DP Peter Field lines up a shot with KNB's last stage Parsons disintegration puppet, a victim of tomb gases in the horror prologue.

PERVERSIONS OF SCIENCE TV episode together and I think he’s a great artist. I love *RAZORBACK* and *HIGHLANDER*. But when I read the screenplay, although I thought it was pretty bold, I also thought there was a lot of stuff that hadn’t been worked out properly. There wasn’t a main lead for the audience to focus on. There wasn’t any real monster or a final Mummy. Yet I thought the subject was promising enough for KNB to get involved, both on the special effects and production sides.”

“I also suggested that Daniel should hire my friend John Esposito, who co-wrote *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN*—a turning point for KNB as it took us from low budget productions into the mainstream—to knock the script into shape. John is very much a Hammer fan and I saw *TALOS* in neo-Hammer

terms. Daniel met John, liked him, and he wrote a new screenplay adding Jason Scott Lee’s Riley character, a Mummy and the Talos-thing monster at the climax which everyone loved.”

Berger designed the film’s basic Mummy look. “We decided pretty quickly that the bandages made up the muscle groups in the body shape,” said Berger. “It’s as if you had skinned someone and their gory muscles were the bandages. We wanted to stay away from the dry, crusty, doddering Mummy wrapped in white rags. Russell wanted the bandages to be like slick oily rags saturated in ancient beeswax and embalming fluids. He was set on using dental dam latex strips painted brown, black and green. I wasn’t sure until we tried it and it looked fabulous. We tested the material in both air and water and it had this great fluidity which Russell thought was perfect.”

The decision was made very early on to use computer animation as sparingly as possible, according to Berger. “For one thing, the budget didn’t allow for it and for another we wanted to do everything as practically as we could. CGI is being used more and more as a crutch by lazy directors who don’t want to deal with problems on the studio floor. But there’s something about physical effects being in the actual frame that adds so much reality to film. You know you can’t touch the Edgar bug in *MEN IN BLACK*. Certain shots of the bandages taking different shapes will be done by visual effects supervisor William Mesa at Flash Film Works in Los Angeles. But Russell wanted us to rely more on the old techniques of shooting in reverse and in water tanks. It may be cheesy, cheap and quick, but it’s still so effective.”

For the few shots of the full-size mummy Berger drafted Roger Morrissey, a 7’ 4” stunt man he had already used to play a giant robot in a *PERVERSIONS OF SCIENCE* episode. Berger laughed, “Russell kept saying we needed to find an aborigine to play the Mummy. I told him he’d read ‘The Making of *ALIEN*’ too many times! We made a full body cast of Roger and sculpted a zip-up suit to fit him up to the ankles, wrists and neck. Then we made head, hands and feet which all slipped on easily. We wanted something that was fast for Roger to put on and everything interlocked together like a puzzle at the joints for a totally seamless look. The

HOWARD BERGER, SFX SUPERVISOR

“I brought in lots of slime and blood. I’m not making a PG movie. Evil triumphs in the most spectacular way and by the end it gets very messy indeed.”



Filming in Luxembourg, KNB's Mark Tavares (l) and David Wogh (r) keep watch on Jake McKinnon dressed as the 7'6" creature, walking on stilts that he designed for the suit. Below: Louise Lombard recoils from the mummy horror.



only glue we needed was for the head application.”

But Berger pointed out, “Just because the bandages have wrapped themselves into human form doesn’t mean that there’s a physical entity inside them. We built a Mummy puppet we could see through to sell that to the audience for a couple of shots. The eyes were cut out so you can see through the head and we put certain holes in the torso to shoot light through and fulfill Russell’s desire to finally get the shot depicted on the original poster for the 1959 Hammer

film. Green screen material was put under the holes for other various interior images to be placed by CGI. It was a simple Mummy mechanism based on the same design we used for the skeletons in ARMY OF DARKNESS. It had to be easy to manipulate with no breakdown points since the tight schedule didn’t allow for that.”

For the bleak climax of TALOS, THE MUMMY, Berger designed two separate special effects. “Sam, the character played by Louise Lombard, goes into a ruined building and

finds this big cocoon attached to the wall by bandages. She then takes a baseball bat, beats the shit out it, mucous oozes out and this aborted fetus-like thing with an embryonic head and tentacle arms flops onto the floor and writhes about. It’s like something from THE THING! Originally, this was made up of stolen body parts from Talos’ victims, but I blew that idea out, wanting the cocoon to house a more nebulous evil instead.

“This effect then leads on to what we call the Talos-thing which is inspired by THE INVISIBLE MAN. Frankly, we ran out of ideas designing this creature. We’d done 60 drawings and still weren’t satisfied. But we’d just finished working on THE X-FILES movie and there was an effect in that picture where a body is infected by aliens and has become almost jellified. The skin is completely clear with the body organs visible underneath. Hey, that’s our Talos-thing! So we built it as a suit which has never been seen before. The KNB workshop back in Los Angeles molded it from a fiberglass cast and gave it a great translucent and luminescent look.”

Other effects Berger included in TALOS THE MUMMY are a dog pup-

pet attacked by the killer bandages and actor Alex Torino wrapped up in a towel dispenser for a strangulation scene in a gay bar toilet. “A CGI shot will be added there of his brains being squished out,” said Berger. “I brought over lots of slime and blood as I’m not making a PG movie. I’m going for the gusto because evil triumphs in TALOS in the most spectacular way and although the movie starts out fairly tame, by the end it gets very messy indeed. Hearts are ripped out and violent birth imagery is called upon. I was a bit nervous about coming to Luxembourg with my slimmed down team to achieve everything we needed but it worked out fine with everyone lending a hand.”

Unlike his partner Robert Kurtzman, though, Berger has no desire to become a full-time director. He said, “Bob has always wanted to direct and Greg



Shelley Duvall looks on in amazement as the mummy wrappings take on the form of a swarm of birds. Right: John Polito as Parsons disintegrates after being exposed to deadly gas inside the tomb of Talos, CGI effects by Flash Film Works.



(Nicotero) was his second unit director on WISHMASTER. But I have no ambition in that area. I’m only doing second unit on TALOS because it makes sense for me to film the special effects shots. I think I’m too smart to direct. I love what I do and I love the little free time I have. I saw what WISHMASTER did to Bob. He was working non-stop around the clock. Sorry, sixteen hours a day is my limit. I want to spend some time with my family!” □

OUTER LIMITS

**Reinventing sci-fi's classic
anthology for the '90s.**

By Frank Garcia

Pen Densham, one of the three executive producers of *THE OUTER LIMITS*, is very protective of his prized television child. When asked to reveal some details of the fourth season, (currently airing on Showtime) he replied, "We want you to tune in and discover each week something unique, wonderful and strange. So many of these stories are dependent on you *not* knowing whether the character is an alien or a human or a robot. If I say 'We're doing a story about a man who discovers he's a robot,' well, I've spoiled the story for you! There's no sense for you to go on that emotional journey. I think that's one of the great things we offer with the series—the unpredictability. It can't be the outer limits if I defined the limits by telling you the story!"

Densham was, however, willing to discuss an upcoming story by executive story editor Chris Ruppenthal, starring Kate Vernon. Talking on a cellular phone while navigating his car in a snowstorm in Toronto, he said "One of the shows that I'm especially pleased with is one called 'Josh.' It's very mystical and moving. It questions belief



and faith systems with a character who might be an alien [or who] might be an angel."

This year *THE OUTER LIMITS* will produce an unusually high number of sequels. There are plans for four episodes to continue stories from previous favorite segments. "Criminal Nature" is a sequel to "Unnatural Selection" which starred Catherine Mary Stewart, "Promised Land" is a continuation of Brad Wright's "The Camp" starring Harley Jane Kozak which was about humans being imprisoned by android drones in the distant future on an alien



The original inhabitants of Janus Five, now an Earth colony in fourth season's "To Tell the Truth," alien makeups by XFX.



Leonard Nimoy (II) stars in "I, Robot," a first season remake of an episode from the classic series. Right: Jon Tenney and Natasha Henstridge star in "Bits of Love," the series third season opener. The MGM sci-fi anthology airs original episodes on Showtime cable.

planet. Another is "Double Helix" which starred actor Ron Rifkin and was about a university scientist who discovered an alien artifact hidden deep in the mountainside and with several students, he embarked on a journey to visit the aliens. The third episode is the second half of "Valerie 23" about a female android. The title of the sequel? "Mary 25." It's about a robot nanny.

Another of the producers' goals this year is to remake their third original OUTER LIMITS episode from the 1960s. So far, two episodes have been remade: the first season's "I, Robot" starring Leonard Nimoy

and directed by his son Adam, and third season's "A Feasibility Study," starring David McCallum and written by the original author, Joseph Stefano.

And just what is the title of the third original series episode to be remade? "Nightmare" was a tense psychological thriller where a group of soldiers were captured and held by aliens which starred a very young Martin Sheen. The remake stars Steven Bauer and Maurice Dean Wint from a script by Sam Egan.

It was suggested that Harlan Ellison's classic SF story "Demon with a Glass

Hand" from the original series (starring Robert Culp) was a good place to start for a sequel. But Densham said, "You know everyone loved that one so much, I fear even touching it!" He laughed and acknowledged that nothing could be done with the title without the famed author's participation. "If there was something that Harlan was passionate about, I'm sure we would find the best possible way to support him!" said Densham. Ellison is indeed at work on a script for THE OUTER LIMITS, adapting a published short story. If all goes well, we might see this episode during the

OUTER LIMITS EPISODE GUIDE

By Frank Garcia

"Simon, did you steal the soil samples?"
—Dave Stockley to Dr. Simon Kress

"This is quite a hobby you have going here. These castles, do they serve a purpose?"
—Dave Stockley to Simon Kress

SANDKINGS ★★★

#1, 3/26/95. Teleplay by Melinda Snodgrass. Directed by Stuart Gillard.

A scientist, Dr. Simon Kress (Beau Bridges), is working at a top secret laboratory studying Martian soil samples. But when a security breach results in the burning of one of the insect creatures being studied in the containment tank, the government project is scuttled. In a desire to continue his research secretly, Kress takes home a Martian soil sample and builds for himself a private home laboratory in the barn adjacent to his house. His wife Kathy (Helen Shaver) becomes increasingly disturbed by Simon's secrecy and growing obsession and she fears for her husband. Kathy becomes even more upset when Simon involves their son Josh (Dylan Bridges) in the experiments. With just the soil samples, Kress manages to raise an entire colony of alien insect creatures he's dubbed "Sandkings." Over the following days and weeks, Kress finds that the insects are worshipping him...

"Sandkings" is an appropriate opener for THE



Beau Bridges stars as mad scientist Simon Kress in a 2-hour adaptation of George R. R. Martin's novella "Sandkings," the series' pilot for MGM.

OUTER LIMITS after a 30-year break. The film is effective and dramatic, with a strong performance by Beau Bridges; well supported by Helen Shaver, and complete with "Zanti Misfits"-like insects to give everyone the creeps. Although it seems slow at times, the ever-changing events keep the viewer's attention. Generally, the special effects are well done but certain shots are obviously computer generated imagery, particularly the end sequence in the basement. The rain and lightning effects at the story's end are a terribly old cinematic device, but hey, it works.

"It could have been a disaster! Beau gave an incredible performance," said executive producer Richard Lewis. "Think about what he did, with nothing to act against. There's a great sequence in the tank when he does his John Wayne kind of moment, pacing back and forth behind the glass, (the insects are) following him. He steps into the glass, and says, 'Charlton Heston, eat your heart out!' There's nothing there but his imagination. Once we put the bugs in and I added the music, it created that awe-inspiring moment."

See sidebar, page 95.



Primitive aliens on Tau Ceti Prime stand in the way of exploiting the planet's rich mineral resources. They are hunted by Earth explorers in "Relativity Theory," an episode of the currently airing fourth season.

fifth season.

After three years and 65 forty-five minute dramas, Densham and his creative staff in Vancouver and Los Angeles have managed to continue attracting loyal viewers on Showtime and in syndication. "We haven't gotten sloppy," said Densham about the secret of their success. "There's a tendency as a series goes on, especially in SF, for people

to ease up and keep putting the rubber monster on TV. And we refuse to do that. The show's surprisingly good, considering that we're in a world where we're shooting them on a very short, tight schedule. I think they're as good as anything on TV—anywhere. That goes as a compliment to the incredible abilities of the people whom we have working with us.

"We critique ourselves very heavily about the quality of the shows and we're very prejudiced about casting. We really like to find and give opportunities to actors who would not normally get their chance to prove themselves in a different character

“There’s a tendency as a series goes on, especially in SF, for people to ease up and keep putting the rubber monster on TV. And we refuse to do that.”

—Exec. Prod. Pen Densham—

role.”

THE OUTER LIMITS has gained a reputation, over the course of three seasons, of hiring recognizable faces to perform on the show. In fact, the producers are often able to attract individuals who are not always known for doing episodic television. Some of the more memorable actors who appeared on the show's third season (currently

airing in syndication) included Natasha Henstridge ("Bits of Love"), Kim Cattrall and Daniel Benzali ("Regeneration"), Kirsten Dunst ("Music of the Spheres"), Mario Van Peebles and Jennifer Beals ("Bodies of Evidence"), Burt Young ("Tempests") and original OUTER LIMITS veteran David McCallum ("Feasibility Study"). Other feature film caliber actors to join the series over the course of the its two seasons, included David Warner, William Sadler, Bruce Davison, John Savage, Robert Patrick, Nancy Allen, Leonard Nimoy, Mark Hamill and Bonnie Bedelia.

continued on page 31

Pen Densham (l) and Richard Lewis, creators and co-executive producers of MGM's new OUTER LIMITS. They're providing a superb anthology showcase for literate SF with feature film production values.



OUTER LIMITS

A STITCH IN TIME

Writer Steven Barnes on creating one of new OUTER LIMITS' best.

By Frank Garcia

"I like very much 'A Stitch in Time.' I thought the show was beautifully written, beautifully directed. The performances were very subtle. There are several things about that show that made it very special."

—Joseph Stefano, series consultant and producer of the original OUTER LIMITS

Time travel stories used to be so much fun, beginning with H.G. Wells' classic 1895 novel, *THE TIME MACHINE*, a fantasy adventure that was finally brought to life in George Pal's 1960 feature film starring Rod Taylor. As an audience, we became accustomed to using time travel as a device to engage in love stories such as in *STAR TREK*'s most popular episode

"City on the Edge of Forever" and Richard Matheson's sweetly romantic novel *Bid Time Return*, adapted to film as *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* in 1980. But, in the *OUTER LIMITS* episode "A Stitch in Time," screenwriter and novelist Steven Barnes changed all that.

What if you had a shattering trauma early in life and built a time machine for revenge and assassination? Barnes pondered this question and, perhaps in a nod towards Nicholas Meyer's adaptation of Karl Alexander's story *TIME AFTER TIME* (1979) where Jack the Ripper stole a time machine, this story is his answer. Barnes' stunningly dark script was given to veteran director Mario Azzopardi, and with actresses Michelle Forbes and Amanda Plummer in the lead roles, became one of *THE OUTER LIMITS*' finest dramatic hours.

"A Stitch in Time" tells the story of Dr. Theresa Givens [Amanda Plummer] who is secretly using a laboratory-constructed time



Amanda Plummer as "The Recidivist," (the show's original title) undergoing makeup on the set, filming the finest of the new *OUTER LIMITS*, scripted by Steven Barnes and directed by Mario Azzopardi.

machine to assassinate convicted serial killers before they can commit their crimes. As a child, Givens had been sexually abused, and developed a hatred for criminals and murderers convicted of sex crimes. The murders are confounding FBI agents who are investigating the matter; they don't realize they have a time-travelling assassin on their hands. Even as the time stream adjusts to a new reality with every murder—as a result of the changes that Givens has wrought—FBI agent Jamie Pratt (Michelle Forbes) manages to match the spent bullets (from different time eras) with the gun Givens purchased, leading the agent straight to the University professor.

"I had a lot of fun with 'Stitch of Time,' coming up with the vilest means of time travel I could think of!" exclaimed Steven Barnes. "I went down to L.A. to meet the various story editors and producers. I pitched probably 10 different ideas the first time. None of the ideas I pitched originally

"My primary program is to overcome any obstacles to a healthy relationship with Frank. I'm sorry. But you are an obstacle."

—Valerie to Rachel

VALERIE 23

★★★

#2, 3/31/95. Written by Jonathan Glassner. Directed by Timothy Bond.

Building robots, the Innobotics conglomerate convinces one of its scientists to take home a female robot for in-depth "study." Over the course of a week, Frank Hellner (William Sadler) realizes that Valerie 23 (Sofia Shinas) is in love with him, but events turn dark as she discovers possessiveness and jealousy.

This is, on the surface, a male adolescent fantasy. You happen to be a lonely scientist and you're handed a beautiful female robot and she promptly falls in love with you. The kernel of the idea for this episode, a human-looking female robot, reaches as far back as Fritz Lang's 1927 cinematic opus *METROPOLIS*. In literary terms, "Valerie 23" also has an ancestor in Lester Del Rey's 1938 classic short story "Helen O'Loy" who was also a robot with a human husband. A provocative story executed with fine performances by the cast finishes with a shocking, but strongly hinted conclusion.

"I think we exceeded the concept of the show on a production level and that doesn't happen often," remarked Richard Lewis. "I think the gal, Sofia Shinas, her personality is kind of robotic in real life. She did such a wonderful job of acting, that you felt she was almost detached from her body. Bill Sadler did such a stunning job with vulnerability, anger that it's a very erotic show.

"He's a cripple, a handicapped person, and this is how he felt inside of himself. That he felt he didn't deserve this woman. Why were people pitying him? The ratings were enormous. People talk about the episode a lot on the Internet. It was wow! It's one of the standout episodes we've done."



Nancy Allen plays the physical therapist who comes between disabled scientist William Sadler and the study of his sex robot in "Valerie 23."

"We could live forever. Amass fortunes. Control countries. Time is power."

—Michael Deighton to Spencer Deighton

BLOOD BROTHERS

★1/2

#3, 4/07/95. Written by Brad Wright. Directed by Tibor Takacs.

Two brothers working for Metadyne Pharmaceuticals, one a scientist named Spencer Deighton (Charles Martin Smith) and the other a businessman named Michael Deighton (Martin Kemp), discover a potentially miraculous vaccine. But they have starkly differing opinions of what to do with the drug. Meanwhile, Spencer meets a woman, Tricia Lange (Kate Vernon), who turns out to be a reporter who's doing a story on the company.

In yet another tale of science gone awry,

"Blood Brothers" is hard to get excited about when the leads, first of all, are unconvincing as brothers. In fact, Kemp appears woefully miscast in the role. Second, the story just doesn't seem to get off the ground as far as the required tension and the scares that are the trademark for THE OUTER LIMITS. With the advent of the film OUTBREAK and THE BURNING ZONE series on the UPN network, biology-related stories seem to be passe already.

"BLOOD BROTHERS was a challenging show," said Richard Lewis. "The question was how could we pull off on our budget and shooting schedule the impact that the movie OUTBREAK was trying to have.

"In fact, when we were developing that, it was right about the time of the *New Yorker* article 'Crisis in the Hot Zone' came out. Before the book and before the movie. We had it in development right around at the time, and we thought, 'Oh god, what an incredible story!' How do we capture this in 45 minutes, the essence of that kind of story?

"It's a little bit of a Cain and Abel story. I remember for me, I wasn't happy with the footage being shot, the real breakthrough came when I asked them to take the brother who was dying and turn him into a corpse. And put him under a sheet. You get a visual impact of what's happening. How disgusting and emotionally rotten the Charles Martin Smith character would be to see his older brother who made him sick."



Unlikely brothers Martin Kemp and Charles Martin Smith discover a potentially miraculous vaccine in Brad Wright's "Blood Brothers."

"Your dead. Give us your dead."

—Kadmis the alien speaking to the world for the first time.

SECOND SOUL

★★★ 1/2

#4, 4/14/95. Written by Alan Brennert. Directed by Paul Lynch.

When aliens arrive on Earth, they request use of human corpses as hosts for their dying race. Dr. Michael Alders (Mykelti Williamson), an official in the government office created to oversee the aliens soon worries that all may not be as it seems. When Karen Heatherton (Rae Dawn Chong), the wife of Alders' friend James Heatherton (D.W. Moffett), dies as a result of a car accident, she becomes a candidate for 'reanimation' and is soon walking the streets again inhabited by the soul of an alien creature. Because James is so grieved by Karen's death, he begins to stalk the new-found tenant of Karen Heatherton's physical body and as a consequence, he raises Alders' wrath. But James insists that something weird is going on. The reanimated aliens are engaging in a series of meetings and James fears an evil, covert agenda.

The premise of "Second Soul" is pure OUTER LIMITS. It pulls you into a world where your once-dead friends or relatives are still walking around, inhabited by alien souls. The combination of Brennert's rich, thematic material and good cast performances with a stunningly compassionate ending makes this segment satisfyingly entertaining.



STAR TREK dropout Michelle Forbes plays FBI agent Jamie Pratt, tracking a killer through time, who uses a weapon not yet invented, in the series 1996 second season premier episode.

got through, although one did eventually turn into 'The Heist.' But I think it was the second pitch meeting that I had...over the phone, that 'Stitch in Time' came out of...

"The original idea was about an FBI agent who becomes aware of a series of killings being committed with a gun that didn't exist. And this woman developed time travel to kill off serial killers. The first take that I did on the idea involved her actually killing the members of the FBI team that were coming after her, one at a time. She would kill the men first, leaving the woman for last. She was very much a man-hater after having been abused the way she was. But the staff of THE OUTER LIMITS said, 'Aahh, a little too dark!' and later, 'Aahh, a little too sympathetic.' Basically, the original story was pretty much as what came across the screen."

Providing a deeper peek into the thought patterns that led him to the construction of his story, Barnes explained, "It was about having fun. And once I had that fun, I created a context. Then I wanted to ask myself questions about how would the human heart react? What would happen if this existed in the world? That's just suspension of disbelief. You give the reader/viewer credit for being intelligent enough to know the difference between reality and fantasy. You say, 'Come along with me!'"

In the case of "Stitch," Barnes decided that once he had his time machine, what followed came logically. But time travelling can be complicated business. Every time Givens steps through the portal to murder someone, the world she returns to becomes a new universe that accounts for the consequences of her deeds. Unless the television viewer is carefully paying attention, this series of changing events can be confusing.

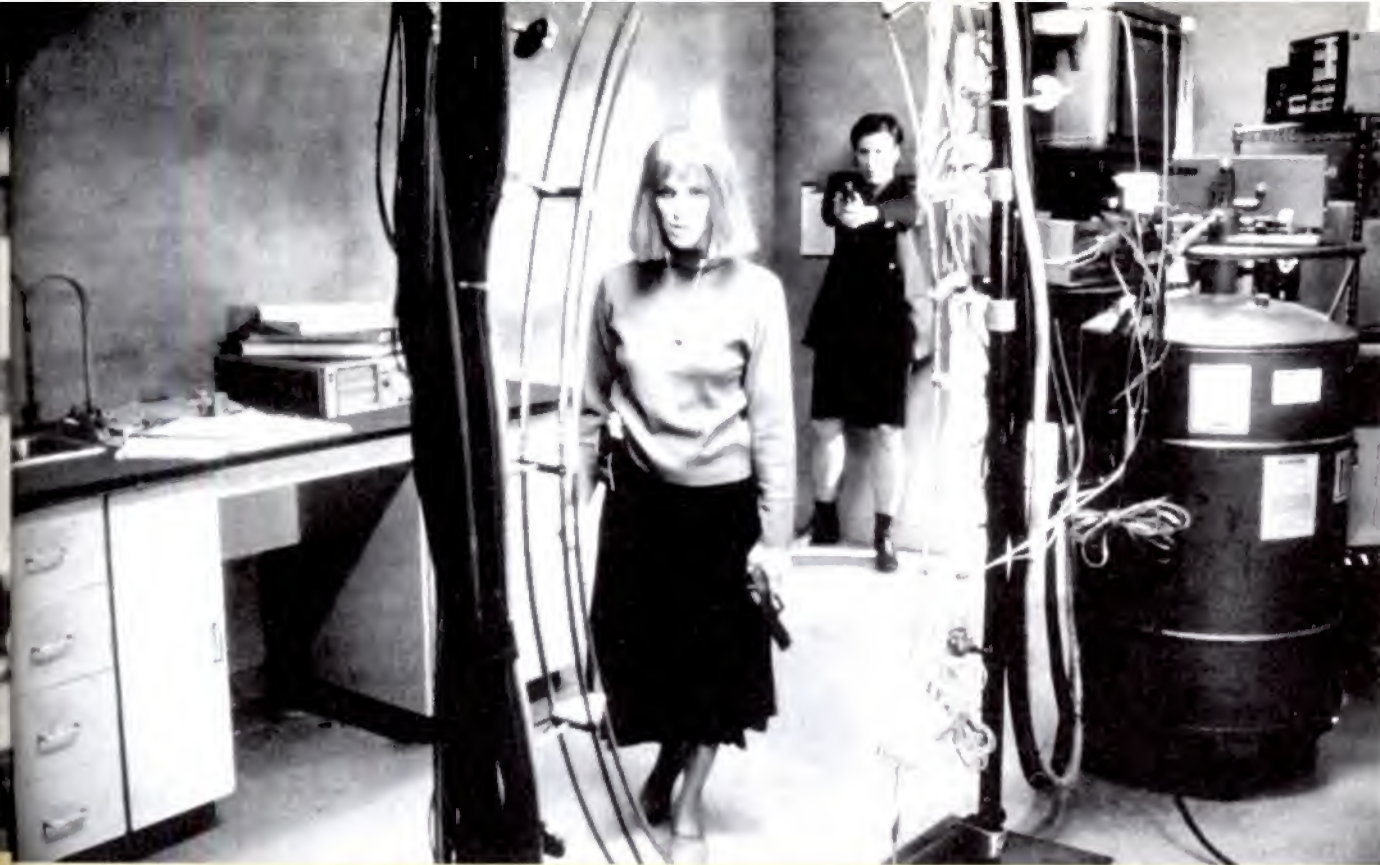
Addressing this, Barnes isn't so sure the story is convoluted. "I don't know!" He shrugged. "I think some ways this story can be too complicated! The FBI agents could-

n't keep up with what's going on. We did everything we could to keep it simple as possible, given the complexity of the situation. With alternate timelines...being changed, it often gets complicated. There's no way around that. That's part of the fun. One part of the story is just good evil fun. But there's another part that's very serious, because you're dealing with a very serious subject. It's about sexual abuse of a young girl. As much fun as I was having in one aspect of the story, in the other, I had to be very careful!"

Although a science fiction novelist by trade who's collaborated with colleagues Larry Niven and Jerry Pournelle, Barnes has written previously for the tube. He wrote two episodes of the 1985 TWILIGHT ZONE, "Teacher's Aide" and a deft adaptation of Robert Silverberg's short story, "To See The Invisible Man." He also has written three episodes of BAYWATCH.

Making the leap from writing in one medium to another, took some adjustment noted Barnes. "Working for television or film as opposed to working in short stories or books is very much a collaborative medium," he said. "You have to be able to play handball with them. And they take a spin with your ideas. And you have to keep dancing with them. You have to be able to modify your approach. You have to be able to change the way you think. One of the reasons that television pays so well is that not everybody can do this. Not everybody can modify their vision."

Stylistically, the form of writing is also different. In prose, a command of the English language conveys to the reader the action of the page, but in screenwriting the content of the descriptions are what matters most. "For a movie you should be able to turn the sound down and follow the plot," said Barnes. "Television is so halfway to that. The visual storytelling is absolutely important, the dialogue is secondary. To



Plummer, who won an Emmy for her performance, plays university professor Theresa Givens, who builds a time machine which she uses to assassinate convicted serial killers before their crimes are committed.

an enormous degree you have to be able to switch back and forth. And there are a number of extraordinarily fine writers who work in the field of books and short stories who cannot make that leap. There's nothing wrong with them, they just don't have those particular cards in their hands. They just don't have the specific cards they need

to switch over to working in television. It's nothing against them in their skills.

"I feel very lucky and very fortunate to have been able to work in a visual medium as I have. I don't underestimate for a second talented people who are doing this. The people I've met have as much intelligence and energy and work as hard as people I've met in other industries. The work doesn't always show because of that collaborative thing! Because so many different people have to be involved in the project. It rarely has a singular flavor. It rarely feels like a vision of one creative person. And that is what we usually consider art to be. It's very difficult."

"A Stitch in Time" is the sum of a collaboration that has attracted the attention of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences in the form of a rare Emmy award for a female actress in a science fiction television role. Amanda Plummer won the Emmy for Outstanding Guest Actress in a Drama Series during the September 1996 award ceremonies. Plummer is actually the third actress to win an Emmy for a genre role. The other two actresses previously winning in this category are Lindsay Wagner for Best Actress in 1976 for *THE BIONIC WOMAN* and Mariette Hartley

“‘[Stitch]’ actually felt on screen the way it felt in my head when I was putting it on the page. Almost *exactly!* I mean, I cried. What can I say?”

—Writer Steven Barnes—

for guest starring in the 1978 two-hour *INCREDIBLE HULK* episode "Married."

Plummer was also nominated for Best Actress in the 1996 Cable ACE awards. However, because of strong views about actors and awards, Plummer did not accept the Emmy or the Cable ACE award. "She not only did not accept the Emmy, she won a Cable ACE as

well [for a role other than *OUTER LIMITS*], and didn't accept that either," explained executive producer Richard Lewis. "She's a very unique person. That's just her style. Her work speaks for itself. We have to respect that. The performance was so unique and that's how she is. She's not doing it for money or awards, she's doing it for the work."

Director Mario Azzopardi, who guided Plummer through her performance, said he was delighted that she won the award. "It's a great honor for us all. She's a brilliant, brilliant artist. She's one of the top Canadian actresses. We're very proud of her. She's a consummate artist. There's nothing that I can say against her performance."

MGM-TV president John Symes noted the day after the Emmy Awards were presented, still flush with excitement, "I think the Emmy probably is the most significant award in recognition for the show, primarily because the Emmys tend to skew more toward network television than they necessarily do for cable. The fact they were able to recognize the extraordinary performance [of] Amanda Plummer and at the same time they were recognizing the incredible storyline and directing and production values that came along with that episode—that's a

Trivia alert: When Alders scans a list of eligible deceased humans for potential reanimation, one of the names on the list just happens to be "Yoshida, Ron" who happens to be the film editor of this episode.

"'Second Soul' was fun for me on a personal level," said Richard Lewis. "FORREST GUMP had just come out. Mykelti Williamson was such a vibrant character in the film. I thought it was great. One of the women who works in our company is Deborah Greenfield. She's married to Eric Roth. And Eric Roth wrote FORREST GUMP. When I was thinking about this and we talked about actors, she said, 'Why don't you go for Mykelti?' I said, 'Oh, he just did FORREST GUMP. It's going to win the Oscar!' She said, 'Call him!' He was thrilled to do it. It's really fun to take someone on the big screen, whom I've never heard of before, who did such a brilliant job on FORREST GUMP, and put him in a different role.

"Because we have been primarily a feature company, we gravitate towards motion picture actors. Which is a little unusual on TV."



Mykelti Williamson (l) revives Rae Dawn Chong with the help of aliens who seek to inhabit the bodies of the deceased in "Second Soul."

"People die every day. It's a consequence of living."

—Dr. Crain to Harlan Hawkes

"I say to hell with nature!"

—Harlan Hawkes

WHITE LIGHT FEVER

★★★

#5, 4/21/95. Written by David Kemper. Directed by Tibor Takacs.

An aging billionaire, Harlan Hawkes (William Hickey), who refuses to accept death, relies on the cutting edge artificial heart research that he's funding to save his life. But Death has different plans for Hawkes and haunts him with mysterious lightning. Meanwhile, Hawkes' doctor, McEnerney (Bruce Davison) has serious doubts whether the artificial heart that Hawkes practically owns should be given to him or to a young woman patient who is more deserving of the gift.

Thematically, "White Light Fever" is potent. Facing death is fearful, and in this story of one man who refuses to die, the subject is addressed. The antagonistic relationship between Hawkes and McEnerney, as demonstrated by Hickey and Davison, is what propels the drama here. Like "Dark Matters," this is almost a *POLTERGEIST* story. The lightning that haunts Hawkes throughout the story doesn't make for a terribly personable threat, though. It is reminiscent of "It Crawled Out of the Woodwork" and "Production and Decay of Strange Particles" in that sense.

"Bill Hickey was such a character!" said Richard Lewis. "I thought of him for the role because I saw him in *PRIZZI'S HONOR*. There was concern whether he would make it through the episode. But he's a pretty tough guy. I thought it



Billionaire William Hickey refuses to accept death in "White Line Fever," a story perhaps more fitting for OL's sister series POLTERGEIST.

was concern whether he would make it through the episode. But he's a pretty tough guy. I thought it was a hard show to pull off. It's a big concept. It's hard to visualize what's in the script." Producer Richard Lewis said this character was deliberately Howard Hughes-like.

About casting Davison, Lewis noted, "I was sitting next to Bruce Davison on the plane and got to talking with him and said, 'Gee, we're doing the show OUTER LIMITS' and he didn't know anything about it. 'Would you like to be in one?' He said, 'Sure!' We got the script and offered it to him and he did it."

"The power we have is a secret. The biggest secret ever." —Karen Ross to Aggie Travers.

THE CHOICE ★★ 1/2

#6, 4/28/95. Written by Ann Lewis Hamilton. Directed by Mark Sobel.

When the parents of a troublesome young girl (who secretly harbors psychic powers) advertise for a private tutor, Karen Ross (Megan Follows) expresses special interest. Karen is well aware of Aggie Travers (Thora Birch) and wants to take her to "Sanctuary," a colony where unique, psychically endowed individuals congregate and help each other. But meanwhile, a government agent hunts Karen Ross and all of her kind from Sanctuary.

There may not be many special effects in "The Choice," but the characters and the actors make the story worthwhile and interesting. Ultimately, the theme is compassion. The heart of this story is the burgeoning friendship between Aggie and Karen and, later, Aggie's growing acceptance of Karen. Any parent can also share the loss and pain that Aggie Traver's mother and father experience at the end of this story when their child is taken from them. This is a simple, straightforward story and occasionally, it's good to be simple without needing to be overly fantastic.

Tutor Megan Follows and father Page Fletcher seek to help the psychically gifted Thora Birch in "The Choice," dogged by government agents.



very exciting validation of the work that the producers of the show have been accomplishing!"

In February, 1997, the Canadian television industry gave out their own awards, the Gemini awards, and "A Stitch in Time" captured an unusual category: Best Dramatic Short Film.

When he talks about filming 'Stitch,' Azzopardi is so pleased with the results that he just says, "Everything worked on that one. Everything worked! You know, if you don't have a script, you don't have a show. You can make a good film out of a good script, but I don't think you can make a good film of a bad script. You can make a bad film of a good script, too!"

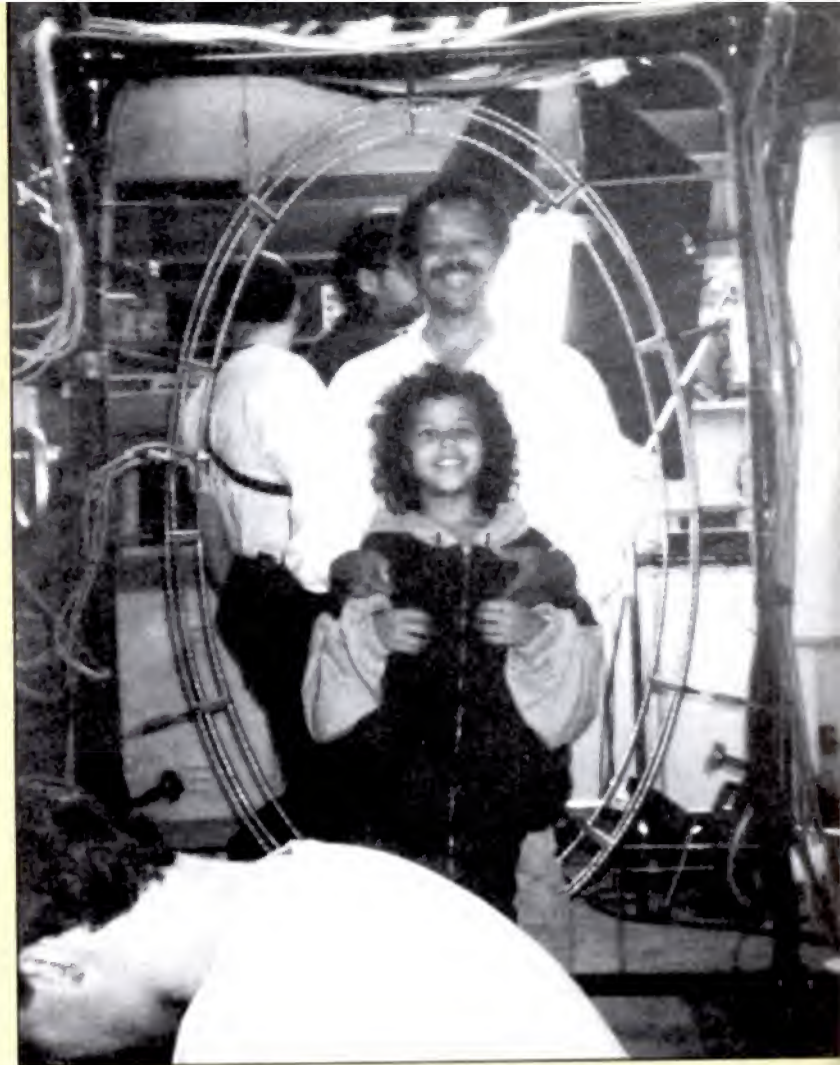
"But, if the script is not the anchor and if the anchor is not strong enough to hold the ship, the ship is going to amble all over the waves and drift. That script was very solidly anchored."

Anxious to witness some of the filming, Steven Barnes jumped into the car with his young daughter and drove the six hours, from Washington State where he lives, to Vancouver.

"I had a chance to meet Amanda up there," remembered Barnes. "I was there the day they filmed the final confrontation between her and the FBI agent. We had a chance to see the time machine, and I met Amanda. It was a very interesting thing about Amanda Plummer. I've been around actors and actresses a lot. There are ways in which she may have been the best actress I've ever had a chance to watch. I don't want to put any other people down. This is a purely subjective thing. There was a quality that she had. I knew she was there. She's living way back inside her head. I don't know what she's like outside the context of her work, but...the way she was on the set of 'Stitch in Time,' I just felt absolutely like I lucked out because this woman is more than a pro. All of the people who worked on the project were pros, but Amanda, there is a touch of that divine madness about her. I really, really enjoyed watching her work. I felt so lucky to have her...quality working with my stuff. Having a chance to watch that was an educational experience for me."

Barnes said it was stunning for him to stand on the set and watch his prose come alive virtually intact. "It actually felt on the screen the way it felt in my head when I was putting it on the page. Almost *exactly!* This was the closest to my original work. I mean, I cried. What can I say? It's that kind of moment that brought me into the field in the first place."

Barnes found further evidence of the



Scriptwriter and novelist Steven Barnes with his daughter on the set at Vancouver's Bridge Studios. Noted Barnes, Plummer provided "a touch of divine madness."

quality of the actors that were chosen when he witnessed the three-way confrontation between the gun-wielding and vengeful Givens, her child-self being held by a rapist, and Jamie Pratt, who followed her through the time portal.

Barnes had praise for actress Michelle Forbes as well. "She held the screen just fine. She was doing a little bit of a Sigourney Weaver impression which I liked! There was one line that she delivered, where I thought she was just wonderful. During that three-way face down, Amanda asks 'How good are you?' and [Michelle replies], 'The best.' She delivered that line exactly like I hoped it would be delivered. I mean, exactly!"

"In some ways Amanda got the Emmy nomination because her role required the greatest degree of change. Her role is very much more the actress's delight. Amanda Plummer stands out in my mind as a wonderful being, with wonderful energy. Michelle's role was more stalwart and unchanging. She's very human.

"I cannot say this about everything I've written. All the major players in that thing did exactly what they were supposed to do and gave their hearts to that. I think that's why it's such a good episode; it's not because I wrote it so wonderfully," laughed Barnes. "It's because it's cast so wonderfully, performed wonderfully, directed wonderfully. Special effects were primo! Everything worked! There's no one person responsible. It's the collaboration. It's the producer that brought all those elements together. I know that I'm extremely proud to have been part of that team. I've contributed the original template for the tree but the actors are the limbs." □

Densham noted that two acting performances in particular stood out during third season, "Howie Mandel, for instance, certainly becomes a fantastic opportunity for us," said Densham. "He's able to find something that he's not experienced before as an artist by working with us. Everybody wins. And you get someone passionate in their work." Mandel appeared in an episode titled "Second Thoughts" where he portrayed a mentally challenged man who was chosen by a scientist as the subject of an highly unusual, impromptu experiment. It's a rare role like this, in THE OUTER LIMITS, that allows viewers to see Mandel in a dramatic context.

Densham is also proud of an adaptation of Stephen King's story, "Revelations of Becca Paulson." "We worked with Steve Weber [who acted and directed the segment]," he said. "That show was fresh and different from mainstream styling. It broke some of the original rules a little bit—and that was good! It stopped us from getting too stuck in the mud. I'm hoping that we'll continue to have those kinds of experiences."

“Some of the goals I have are to continue having the show challenge our creativity. To not get complacent. To not get bogged down. Don't repeat.”

—Exec. Prod. Pen Densham—

With the acting community's attention at hand, Densham and company constantly try to imbue the series with a mix of thematic storytelling material. The key to their success is that they strive to never repeat themselves. "At the beginning of the year we do a series of goals with our creative staff of things they want to accomplish," said Densham. "We're continu-

ing to explore. We did the sequel to 'Quality of Mercy,' [titled 'Light Brigade'] and we did 'The Camp.' There's genetics stories, alien stories, stories about the morality of punishment. We ask where can we really push the limits? What inspires our writers to go and write? I would believe, and I think they do too, it's something they want to say. That's the wonderful thing about THE OUTER LIMITS, it's a series that's built around human nature and the extraordinary moralities and ambiguities of this animal that we are. Our stories have to explore and challenge those value systems. And the stories themselves come out of a writer's passion, so they're going to be a great stories!

"Some of the goals I have is to continue having the show challenge our creativity. To not get complacent. To not get bogged down. Don't repeat. Don't get trapped. To keep trying to find new ways of interpreting science fiction and taking it to the 'outer limits.' I see us as a flagship of science fiction. I'm always asking our creative team

continued on page 35

George Bloomfield directs third season's "The Awakening," an alien abduction show with a twist, alien makeups (inset) created by XFX.



What knocks against the story is that psychic powers is such an old theme in literature and films. There are the films CARRIE, THE FURY and even the classic series "Man with the Power" starring Donald Pleasence.

"We wanted an easy production show to start with," said Richard Lewis of the series' first filmed episode. "Megan Follows was a famous Canadian actress—she had done ANNE OF GREEN GABLES. I got a tape of GREEN GABLES, hired her and got her to the set and she just had a child! She was just a month after delivery and looked chubby. I was horrified. No one told me. We had to dance around that. The ratings of that was very high."

"The Choice' was pretty good given that it was designed to be unambitious," said story editor Michael Cassutt. "It was designed to be the first thing filmed. I call that the 'training wheels' episode."



Gifted college student Josh Brolin realizes he can see into the future using virtual reality technology he has developed in "Virtual Future."

"After all, if you want to discover new frontiers, you must first lose sight of the shore."

—Bill Trenton to Jack Pierce

"What I saw isn't important. What's important is... can it be changed?"

—Bill Trenton to Jack Pierce

VIRTUAL FUTURE

★★

#7, 5/05/95. Written by Shawn Alex Thompson. Directed by Joseph L. Scanlan.

A college student makes a startling discovery when he tries out an experimental virtual reality suit. While using the suit, Jack Pierce (Josh Brolin) realizes that he can see into the future. And to his surprise, it is a future that can be changed. When Jack's corporate mogul employer, Bill Trenton (David Warner), understands what can be done with the suit, he becomes interested in using it for his own nefarious purposes.

If you're a time travel fan or if you like predictions, here's a show for you. TIME AFTER TIME's David Warner brings his unique personality into this entertaining yarn, which presents the dark side of humanity through Trenton's ambition and greed in his desire to take personal advantage of the suit and its capabilities. But the young and intelligent Jack Pierce manages to stay one step ahead of him. This is the first of about three OUTER LIMITS episodes that uses virtual reality to spring the plot. (The other two are "Mind Over Matter" and "The Sentence.")

"David Warner has been a friend of Trilogy for years as an actor," said Richard Lewis. "We had done a pilot for CBS called TAKING LIBERTY for Jeff Sagansky. We wrote this episode with him in mind. I thought it was a really ambitious show. Virtual Reality was something that was really hot about three years ago. I thought we found a way to make an emotional connection for it. I thought some of the visuals and concepts were pretty wild."



"I get in your head too, Benny!"
—Wayne Haas to Ben Kohler.

"I...operate...alone!"
—Wayne Haas to Ben Kohler.

LIVING HELL ★★1/2

#8, 5/12/95. Story by Pen Densham & Melinda Snodgrass. Teleplay by Melinda Snodgrass. Directed by Graeme Campbell.

A drifter, Ben Kohler (Sam Robards), who has been shot by a street punk, becomes the recipient of an experimental computer chip by Dr. Jennifer Martinez (Elizabeth Peña) who saves his life, but the results are frightening. The chip allows Kohler to see through the eyes of a serial killer named Wayne Haas (Stephen Shellen). Distraught, Kohler seeks the doctor's help, and wants to stop the killer. But when Haas kidnaps Martinez, police detective Wilson (Don S. Davis) accuses him of being the serial killer.

This is an intriguing premise that's executed intensively and well directed by Campbell. Robards and Peña provide good performances but this is not your typical OUTER LIMITS storyline. It's really one that's better suited for, say, THE X-FILES. However, the story does raise interesting ethical questions about medical experiments and examines the state of the art of today's technology.

"Pretty intense. A little too violent," said Richard Lewis. "A little too harsh. The concept of someone having a mental illness that takes over all his behavior is totally incredible. Now, they're doing PROFILER, MILLENNIUM, so both those shows are exactly the same concept, way ahead of the game and too violent for me."



Drifter Sam Robards becomes the recipient of an experimental life-saving computer chip after being shot by street punks in "Living Hell."

"They're still here—the demons."
—Father Anton Jonascu

CORNER OF THE EYE ★★

#9, 5/19/95. Written by David Schow. Directed by Stuart Gillard.

A priest, Father Anton Jonascu (Len Cariou), starts having frightening visions of demons. When his physician, Dr. Pallas (Chris Sarandon) and two others announce that they are aliens, they present him with a gift of healing powers which opens the floodgates to the media hounds. But Jonascu is unaware of their true purpose on Earth and of the role the aliens want him to take in their plans.

If anyone would be inspired by the series' opening narration, "From the inner mind..." this is a script that might appear. Cariou's strong performance as the priest adds dimension and propels this controversial storyline. The makeup is appropriately demonic but it's a show like this that demonstrates the limitations of having "bears" walk through THE OUTER LIMITS. The show is now capable of much more. (see makeup photo, page 74.)

"You've got so much baggage from doing anything with the cloth," said film editor Michael Robison who worked with director Gillard on this

OUTER LIMITS

TRILOGY

From features to television, Trilogy gains momentum.

By Frank Garcia

There are thousands of television production companies in Hollywood. So why is a feature film company like the Trilogy Entertainment Group, which is famous for giving us feature film blockbusters like ROBIN HOOD: PRINCE OF THIEVES, BACKDRAFT and BLOWN AWAY, in television producing THE OUTER LIMITS? According to OUTER LIMITS executive producer Richard Barton Lewis, (who's also a partner in Trilogy) the company was always looking to create television. But it had to be just the right project to attract their interest.

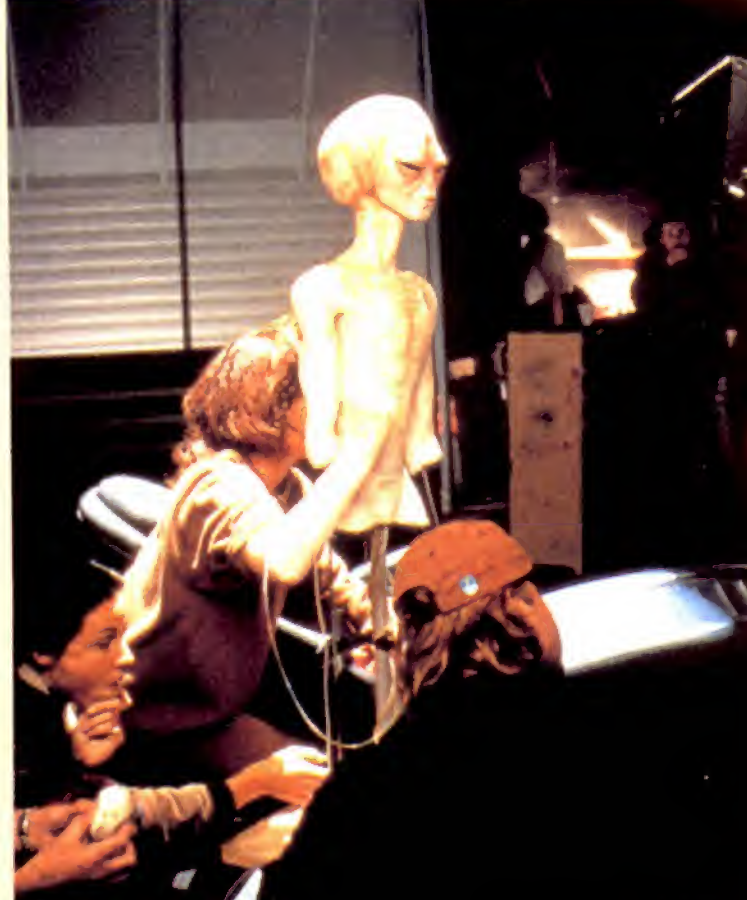
"What's happened and what's exciting for us and the reason you see us doing so much television with more to come, is on a creative and business level, we're storytellers," explained Lewis. "That's what we enjoy doing. We're producers, writers and directors. There's lots of stories we want to tell and not all of them necessarily work on

the big screen. Television is kind of an immediate response on a creative level. We make up a story like 'The Conversion,' bring in Rebecca DeMornay [to direct], it goes on TV, [and as a result] I get Internet letters...ratings [and] response from peers, colleagues, and from the audience. It's very fulfilling for me as a creative person because it's instantaneous. TV shows are seen by more people than movies are! Even a big success like ROBIN HOOD: PRINCE OF THIEVES was [the film sold worldwide \$450 million worth of tickets], I'll bet you OUTER LIMITS is seen by more people!

"A movie like BACKDRAFT took four years to get made from concept to finished product. That's normal. We have movies that we've been working on for 15 years that haven't been made."

Sitting at the top desk at MGM-TV, John Symes has more personal reasons why Trilogy is working for him on THE OUTER LIMITS. "Trilogy was chosen for a number of reasons. The most important was that I

Filming the alien for second season's "Beyond the Veil," makeup by Steve Johnson's XFX. Chris Brancato's script featured Michael O'Keefe as a mental patient who suspects ETs are running the hospital.





STAR TREK's Michael Dorn logged more space time in first season's "The Voyage Home," with a creature reminiscent of the classic series "Counterweight," Trilogy's strategy to cast familiar faces and names.

had a relationship with the guys for over a decade," said the president of MGM/UA-TV who worked at Paramount prior to this present post. "I've consistently tried to get them into the television business, without success. When the opportunity for OUTER LIMITS came along, it was the first time I sold them something that they were able to embrace.

Because they embraced it, we've got ourselves a top flight show. At the same time, we decided we would make the show in Canada. Because all three of them have a Canadian background, it was a lot more credibility for us to produce the show up in Vancouver.

"Most importantly, it was an opportunity for us to bring in feature filmmakers into the television world and use their expertise to stretch our limitations almost to the point of snapping so that we could deliver the very best show."

The three points represented in the triangular Trilogy logo are Pen Densham, Richard B. Lewis and John K. Watson. Each partner has been active with their own projects over the years. MOLL FLANDERS (1996) was a historical drama feature directed by Densham. LARGER THAN LIFE (1996) was a Bill Murray comedy film produced by Watson.

British-born Pen Densham is a producer-writer-director who has been named by *Cinefantastique* as one of the top 10 most influential people in science fiction. It's fair to say that he was literally born into the film industry, as his father was a short subject filmmaker and his mother was a child extra on Alexander Korda's 1936 film of H.G.

“ [Doing TV] is like an oil well: You're drilling away. Episodes go on. You make sure they're ready. It doesn't have the ups and downs the movie business has. ”

Richard B. Lewis, exec producer

Wells' THINGS TO COME. As a child, Densham went to art school and made a living as a photographer.

At 19 years old, he moved to Toronto, Canada, where he directed commercials and documentaries. While there, Densham hooked up with an award-winning film editor named John K. Watson, and together, they formed Insight Productions. That company

produced documentaries that attracted the attention of the Queen of England. In 1977, Densham and Watson received a medal from Her Majesty for their contributions to the arts in Canada. It was on the production of a film titled THE ZOO GANG that Densham and Watson first met the UC Berkeley/UCLA film school-trained co-producer Richard B. Lewis, and Trilogy Entertainment was born.

Today, Trilogy has over 20 feature film projects in development with a three-year first look film deal with MGM in addition to their five-year first look TV deal. Lewis noted of his partner Watson, "John has been less involved with [OUTER LIMITS] because we can only have one daily boss; otherwise it's very fragmenting and confusing. He was instrumental in bringing Beau Bridges and Lloyd Bridges to the table [for 'Sandkings'], which was critical. Those were relationships he had. Every once in a while he comes up with a casting idea or a relationship he has and brings them to the show."

THE OUTER LIMITS for Showtime Cable was Trilogy's first foray into the world of television. "When we started OUTER LIMITS we had a 44-episode commitment. That's unheard of!" remarked Lewis, who needed to be reminded that in 1985 Steven Spielberg got his half-hour an-

episode. "I thought it was a great choice of style. So much of editing is embellishing stuff, especially in an anthology show."

Interestingly, the original version of the script concerned a police officer seeing the demons, not a priest.

"This falls under 'I'm not a big fan of guys running around in a rubber suit kind of story,'" said Richard Lewis. "I think it was a really good idea. (But) I think not our best production."

"She started screaming, pointing under the bed."

—Sharon Rosman, to Dr. Jon Hoffman

UNDER THE BED

★★★ 1/2

#10, 5/26/95. Written by Lawrence Meyers. Directed by Rene Bonniere.

When a boy is kidnapped from his bedroom, taken by "the bogeyman" according to his young sister, a police officer (Barbara Williams) and a child psychologist (Timothy Busfield) look into the matter and arrive at some improbable answers to the cause of the kidnapping. They begin considering that a creature hiding in the caves is responsible for a deed that stretches back several generations.

Here's another story that's as old as fables—monsters under the bed—taken through the OUTER LIMITS wringer. Busfield and Williams' performances add a sincerity to the drama and Rennison is also convincing as the child who lost her brother. There's something slightly hokey about the boogeyman's "suit," but hey, it's an OUTER LIMITS "bear!"

"What I remember about that, and we joke about it in the office, is the girl going, 'It was under the bed! Under the bed!'" This young actress, said Richard Lewis, is destined for a successful movie career just based on her performance in this episode. "I thought that Colleen Rennison was an awesome actress. What she was able to do with Timothy Busfield is absolutely make me believe that she has had this incredibly stressful experience with her brother. That she was able to get deep inside of herself and get into a little bit of a trance as if she's being hypnotized. There are very few child actors who have that ability to kind of disappear into the role. Most kid actors are awkward. They're very self-conscious. But she was completely uninhibited."



The bogeyman of "Under the Bed," the stuff of fable taken through the OUTER LIMITS wringer, harkening to the "bears" of the classic series.

"My brother visited me again. We got along as well as we did when he was alive. After he left me, I started to thinking, 'Is this what's in store for me, sibling rivalry for all eternity?'"

—Paul Stein

DARK MATTERS

★★★

#11, 6/02/95. Written by Alan Brennert. Directed by Paul Lynch.

When the crew of an Earth spaceship become trapped in a region of space with an alien

spaceship, the captain, Paul Stein (John Heard), receives a visit from his ghostly brother Kevin Stein (David Cubitt). But their reunion brings back the unwanted memories and arguments relating to a traumatic moment from their childhood. Meanwhile, Stein has to find a way out of their galactic whirlpool and return to normal space.

Alan Brennert's script brings welcome emotional moments for the characters, something rarely found in science fiction hardware-related stories because usually, the plotting is centered on situations that don't emotionally affect characters. *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*'s "The Bonding" and "Family" notwithstanding, "Dark Matters" is a refreshing change. What holds back the emotional impact of the episode, however, is John Heard's restrained performance. If Heard had cranked up the resonance a little higher, there would probably have been a greater emotional connection with the viewing audience. Otherwise, the rest of the cast and Lynch's direction make this episode part of what brings out the best of *THE OUTER LIMITS*: emotional stories in unexpected locations and situations.

"What's interesting in this one is David Cubitt," said Brennert. "He's gone to roles in *TRADERS* (a Canadian series now on USA Cable). A wonderful actor, a Jimmy Cagney kind of guy. He played John Heard's brother. I thought that was a pretty spiritual show.

"Someone loses a brother and the brother comes back and talks to him," said Richard Lewis. "In many ways, it's a precursor to what I wanted to do in *POLTERGEIST*. It's about someone who dies with unfinished business and comes back to resolve it.

"It's a hardware show and I'm proud that we were able to creatively carve out most of the hardware and replace it with heart and emotions. That's hard to do."

"[Alan Brennert] named the spaceship after the late Deke Slayton, who was an astronaut friend of mine, about whom I had written a book," said Michael Cassutt, of his book *Deke! The Autobiography of Deke Slayton* by Deke Slayton with Michael Cassutt.



John Heard and Allison Hossack are trapped in deep space with an alien ship in "Dark Matters," a nicely dramatic script written by Alan Brennert.

"If you could do it all over again, would you do anything differently?" —Lucas to Henry

THE CONVERSION ★★★

#12, 6/09/95. Story by Richard B. Lewis. Teleplay by Brad Wright. Directed by Rebecca De Mornay.

When Henry (Frank Whaley) murders three people at a Christmas party and flees into the mountains, he encounters a mysterious stranger named Lucas (John Savage), who seems to know all about him. Together in the mountain cabin restaurant, Lucas and Henry discuss life, liberty and Henry's possible redemption.



Ryan Slater as the genetic mutant of second season's "Unnatural Selection," makeup by XFX. The new series carries on the monster-filled tradition of the original, but less pervasively and obtrusively.



thology *AMAZING STORIES* off the ground with a two-season order. "When we started *POLTERGEIST* we had a 44-episode commitment. We're doing *FAME L.A.*, and the studio is going with a 44-episode commitment there. But these are huge commitments—of finances, people's time. And it makes it very worthwhile and tremendous security and financial gain to know that when you invest your heart and soul into something, it's something that's going to be going for a while!"

It was during the heat of the second season of *LIMITS* that Lewis developed and created a supernatural/suspense Showtime drama titled *POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY*, inspired by the three films of the same name. With *OUTER LIMITS* now in its fourth season and *POLTERGEIST* its third, yet another television series headed by Trilogy went before the cameras. *FAME L.A.* is a syndicated musical drama based on the Alan Parker film and the 1980s television series of the same name.

Joseph Stefano, the producer of the original *OUTER LIMITS*, said he marvels at the company's success, and more important, he is impressed by the people in it. "I admire their company and what they are doing. I thought [Pen Densham's] *MOLL FLANDERS* was a marvelous movie. I thought it was a very effective, touching story. It accomplished much more than just a *MASTERPIECE THEATER*. Many pictures set in that time period in England turn out to be a copy of that.

"There are many things about a production company that count besides how good they are, how successful they are. They're nice people."

Stefano's partner on the original series, Leslie Stevens, who passed away in May,

shared similar sentiments about the company that inherited the torch by recreating his 1960s series for a 1990s audience. "I'm tickled that they're that good at what they do," he said. "They're great. I couldn't be more pleased at the work they do. That they are that conscientious and that capable. They know what they're doing."

Noted Richard Lewis, "We are making one to two movies a year, we have three TV series going, and we did a mini-series with Peter Benchley based on his book, *White Shark*," which has since been retitled *CREATURE*. "We also did a remake of *THE TAKING OF PELHAM ONE TWO THREE* for ABC," said Lewis. The film starred *MEN IN BLACK* actor Vincent D'Onofrio. The CBS network commissioned another remake from Trilogy, a television edition of the classic western, *THE MAGNIFICANT SEVEN*, starring Michael Biehn, Eric Close and Ron Perlman.

Lewis sees television as being a much more stable medium to work in than producing films. "On a business level, it's like an oil well. You're going to keep drilling away. The episodes go on. You creatively make sure they're as ready as they can be. It doesn't have the ups and downs that the movie business has." □

XFX's David Dupuls applies the makeup for "Unnatural Selection," a show that explored the uses of genetic technology.



to try and create shows that are going to keep an audience coming back."

Thinking "themes" for the OUTER LIMITS is deadly, noted Densham. "You start clipping off what might be wonderful and unique."

To keep the series fresh, Densham allowed for some turnover in personnel behind the cameras. Co-executive producers Jonathan Glassner and Brad Wright, who spearheaded the series in the first three years, have taken a step back to attend to their own television child—Showtime's STARGATE SG-1. However, they remain on the show as consulting producers. "We have some new talent trying their hand at it. We've been very excited to see the quality of the scripts that have been created," said Densham.

Taking over the fourth season as co-executive producer is producer/screenwriter Carleton Eastlake [THE BURNING ZONE], who's assisted by Brad Markowitz as supervising producer. Markowitz is a veteran from DARK SKIES and M.A.N.T.I.S. Chris Ruppenthal [LOIS & CLARK] also joins the staff as executive story consultant. He's served in similar capacities on THE X-FILES and THE PRETENDER. He is sharing the title with series veteran Naren Shankar (STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION). These two share their brainstorming sessions with senior executive story consultant Sam Egan.

To help attract a faithful audience this year, some of the actors to look for include Lou Diamond Phillips (LA BAMBA), Maria Conchita Alonso (MOSCOW ON THE HUDSON), Amanda Tapping (STARGATE SG-1), Gary Cole (AMERICAN GOTHIC), Melissa Gilbert (LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE), and Robin Duke (SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE), directed in an episode titled "Glyphic" by Catherine O'Hara (SCTV).

The show's gotten prestigious enough that heavyweight industry names are starting to approach the producers' Trilogy Entertainment production company with a desire for roles. (Oscar-winning actress Mar-

“I see us as a flagship of science fiction. I'm always asking our creative team to create shows that are going to keep an audience coming back.”

—Exec. Prod. Pen Densham—



Jason Gray-Stanford as the deformed, genetically engineered superman of fourth season's "Criminal Nature."

velopment of our shows, scripts evolve and they may not always end where they start," said Densham. "So we felt that by having two or three we would have a better chance at getting a feature made more quickly.

"We are approaching a point where we have one script that we've taken very seriously. We're pretty sure we'll present that to the studio shortly. Now, that may mean rewrites. It may mean the budget is too expensive, or it may mean we're synchronized on our goals for the show with the studio. We're looking for their response to that project." Densham declined to reveal who the scriptwriters were, although he does say that all writers are OUTER LIMITS veterans. Also, the scripts will be brand new and not grandiose remakes of original stories.

As for the final fate of the Showtime series, this has not yet been written. "We're not looking at seven [seasons]. We're still making sure to see that the fourth season is given everything it needs to be a great show," insisted Densham. "We certainly like the idea and hope that it does go to a fifth.

"The show will work as long as people get a pleasure out of working on it."

lee Matlin's role in first seasons' "The Message" was written for her.) Although he was understandably reluctant to publicly disclose a detailed list, "We hear tidbits," Densham acknowledged. "I hear Quentin Tarantino's name mentioned around and the fact that he'd like to do one. Alec Baldwin has inquired and he's suggested that he try and find time to do one. That's the kind of thing we're getting more of. I hesitate to use people's names when we don't have a deal with them! We have our own list of people whom we're trying to find ways of fitting into our schedules."

To really understand how bright the future is for THE OUTER LIMITS, Densham made a startling revelation. For some time now, the producers have quietly taken steps towards developing scripts for a potential feature film. "We're developing two or three scripts simultaneously because we knew that as in the de-

From the first moment of the surrealistic, stylish teaser to the surprising conclusion of this drama, Rebecca DeMornay does an admirable job in her directorial debut. Whaley and Savage provide wonderfully contrasting performances in the first of Brad Wright's many "stage play" scripts for the series. Perhaps because of the extensive dialogue between Whaley and Savage, "The Conversion" leans heavily towards the TWILIGHT ZONE arena.

"What I wanted to do is, 'What if you had done something [wrong] and you had a second chance?' It's almost a flip over of IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE," said Richard Lewis, who provided the story. "And what would you do if you had a second chance at it, to make up from some mistakes you made on a kind of spiritual level. What we were able to do in a very subtle way is play on that story. Brad took my concept and story and did a beautiful job of writing it. It's a difficult show to write. There's no action. You know what I wanted to do? I joke about it all the time, I wanted to do a science fiction version of [Louis Malle's] MY DINNER WITH ANDRE."



John Savage and director Rebecca DeMornay filming "The Conversion," the first of Brad Wright's literate "stage play" scripts for the show.

"You'll always be human. No matter what they do to you. They can't change that. Ever."
—Skokes to Bree

QUALITY OF MERCY ★★★★★
#13, 6/16/95. Written by Brad Wright. Directed by Brad Turner.

In a futureworld where Earth is engaged in a galactic war with brutal aliens, Major John Skokes (Robert Patrick) has been captured and is thrown into a cave cell. Inside the cell, he finds a young woman, a cadet named Bree (Nikki de Boer) who says she's been there for several months, and the aliens have just begun experimenting on her. Determined to escape, Skokes examines the cave closely and encourages the despondent cadet to survive. But when the aliens come back and take Bree for additional experiments, she returns with even greater, gruesome physical changes. When Skokes thinks he's found an exit through the ceiling air vent, he attempts an escape, only to be attacked by a creature. Returning to his cell injured, Skokes reaches a point where he considers suicide for both of them.

Screenwriter Wright, director Turner and production designer Steve Geaghan have created in this story an instant classic—one of the OUTER LIMITS' finest hours. Nikki de Boer, a relatively unknown Canadian actress, holds her own against T2's Robert Patrick with surprising ease. Their joint performance presents an engrossing prisoner's nightmare that ends in a brilliantly, dark unexpected revelation. It's not often that Evil triumphs in television dramas. It would be very interesting to mount "Quality of Mercy" as a theatrical stage production.

"This is Brad Wright's massive genius!" exclaimed Richard Lewis. "We wanted to do a bottle show. We went over budget in our previous

episode. Brad came up with this idea and wrote a stunning script. We went after Robert Patrick and we got him. Then, we looked at a lot of actresses. I remember the guys in Canada wanted us to sign off on some woman, who shall go nameless, who I felt was very harsh and kind of shrieky. I had a tape of Nikki deBoer for, I think, another episode. She looked like a modern version of Genevieve Bujold. They're very similar kind of actors. I thought, 'Wow! This girl is great. She's vulnerable. She's sexy, she's intelligent.' It worked out great. And that takes place all in one room like 'The Conversion.' We found another hour that takes place in one room, and it's spellbinding! It's very emotional and it feels like all the Greek tragedies that you want in OUTER LIMITS. I was really pleased with that one."

See sidebar, page 47



Robert Patrick and Nikki de Boer, stuck in an alien prison during a galactic war with aliens in Brad Wright's superb "Quality of Mercy."

"I need you."

—Hannah Valesic

CAUGHT IN THE ACT

★★

#14, 6/23/95. Written by Rob Forsyth. Directed by Mark Sobel.

When a tiny alien pod crash lands into a woman's bedroom, Hannah Valesic (Alyssa Milano) is taken over by an alien creature that feeds on the sex act by "absorbing" the males into the female's physical body. Her boyfriend Jay (Jason London) becomes perplexed by Hannah's strange behavior. But when he discovers the pod and takes it to Professor Hugaro (Saul Rubinek) who studies it, they are surprised to consider that an alien has taken over Hannah's body. Meanwhile, because one of the college students has disappeared because of Hannah, a detective (Garry Chalk) suspects Jay of murder.

Stepping into an arena where no SF anthology has gone before, THE OUTER LIMITS tries a daring and provocative mix of sex and science fiction. The unlikely pairing of these two different subjects can usually be found in literary science fiction (Robert Heinlein's STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND) but other recent cinematic examples include SPECIES and LIFEFORCE. However, as attractive as Milano may be, her acting doesn't rise to the occasion as well as if another actress had taken the role.

"This was precipitated by the studio. They wanted us to do a sexy episode," said Richard Lewis. "I think because they saw what happened to 'Valerie 23,' and how good it was, and how they thought it would really be a big ratings hit. We had some debates about it. I didn't quite get why we should do one... It felt like a remake of something else that had been seen. I don't know why, but... a little bit alien, except a sexy version of an alien."

"'Caught in the Act' started out as an alien sex vampire story," said former co-executive producer Michael Cassutt. "But there's thematic material underlying that, which is about sexually transmitted diseases. It's like an AIDS story. In a

To understand how Pen Densham and his colleagues have built for themselves a record-breaking, landmark SF anthology series, we have to do some time-traveling. Come along, let's step through Dr. Theresa Givens' time portal, and walk through the mists of entropy. On the other side, we arrive at Sunset Boulevard in Los Angeles, California in the evening of March 20, 1995. Looming before us is the Director's Guild Theater. And inside we find 600 invited guests. They're here for the first public screening of a new OUTER LIMITS series entitled "Sandkings" (see page 95).

If there was one miraculous, triumphant moment in the history of the series, it was this evening and among these people.

Included in those who were present were the stars and principal filmmakers of "Sandkings"; series composer John Van Tongeren; SF novelist George R.R. Martin, who supplied the source novella; Trilogy executive producers Pen Densham, Richard Lewis and John Watson; co-executive producers Michael Cassutt and Jonathan Glassner; MGM/UA chairman Frank Mancuso and MGM-TV president John Symes.

But also conspicuously present were two gentlemen without whom the entire affair would not have been possible: Leslie Stevens and Joseph Stefano, the creator and the producer of the original 1960s series.

Before the film rolled, John Symes addressed the seated guests and complimented the Trilogy producers for reviving THE OUTER LIMITS and creating what he believed was an incredible film. He concluded his remarks by expressing his optimism of a successful future for the series.

"That was the culmination of a years' work for MGM Television," remembered Symes. "That was the first thing we ever presented to the public. If OUTER LIMITS had failed, MGM-TV would be a much different company than it is today. The fact that the guys at Trilogy made it such a success, has given us opportunities to go out and become a fairly prominent supplier of television programming in the business.

"Most importantly that night was just a

“Mr. Stefano was an absolute gentleman. I remember him coming up to me crying, saying ‘We never, ever, could have done [the original series] at this scale.’”

—Exec. Prod. Richard Lewis—



Lou Diamond Phillips as the android McCoy in fourth season's "Identity Crisis," makeup created by XFX.

culmination of a lot of work and a lot of cooperation. It was very nice to be able to sit in the room and acknowledge Joe Stefano and Leslie Stevens and at the same time acknowledge [Trilogy partners] Richard Lewis, Pen Densham and John Watson. "One [group] gave birth to the original show and the [other] people are the ones who picked up the torch. It was a great evening."

For executive producer Richard Lewis, the DGA screening was a memorable moment to publicly launch the series and it also made for poignant moments. "It was a meeting of the old and the new," recalled Lewis. "Mr. Stefano was an absolute gentleman. I remember him coming up to me crying. What he said to me was, 'We never, ever, could have done it at this scale!' I felt proud. It was like a dream come true. It was very flattering and very moving for me and for my partners Pen and John and the whole company that he admired

and was enthralled with what we're doing—that it had exceeded his hopes."

"That was very nice, very unexpected and I was very grateful," remarked Joseph Stefano. "It was kind of amazing because I hadn't been anywhere near the production when it was being shot up in Canada.

"I thought the story was wonderful. The whole sense of the OUTER LIMITS was right there on the screen. It's as if no time had gone by except there were some special effects that we couldn't have afforded in the early 1960s, but as for content, the sense of the character and the man, and the madness that comes out of obsession, 'Sandkings' is just the kind of show that's a hallmark of OUTER LIMITS.

"It was beautifully done. Everyone seemed to like it. There were moments when people were covering their eyes from fear. That was good. It was properly horrifying."

For two seasons from 1963 to 1965, United Artists and the ABC television network broadcast one of the most unusual science fiction anthologies ever to

OUTER LIMITS

THE LEGACY

A look at the impact the series had on sci-fi TV.

By Frank Garcia

To fully understand the legacy of THE OUTER LIMITS as produced by Leslie Stevens and Joseph Stefano in 1963, we talked to screenwriter Alan Brennert and Trilogy Entertainment executive producer Pen Densham. Brennert has written scripts for the new series, and Densham was instrumental in getting the new series off the ground.

"I think that Stevens/Stefano did for science fiction and television what Rod Serling did for fantasy," said Brennert. "They really were the first people to deliver a consistently sophisticated humanistic science fiction TV series. Before STAR TREK, THE OUTER LIMITS was an

adult show, very much about human beings, regardless of how many monsters might have appeared in it. The show was always about human foibles, aspirations and emotions. Like Serling, they didn't look down on the material. They treated it with respect. They were aware of their forebears in prose speculative fiction. I think they gave it an adult slant that no other SF show had done up until then.

"They created a genre that hadn't been on television before—science fiction/horror. I think on a stylistic level that OUTER LIMITS was a groundbreaking show. It had gorgeous black and white photography by Conrad Hall. It had that gothic flair. It was a show that was as stylistically interesting as it was on a story level. That's pretty high praise.

Discovering the "Moonstone," a forerunner of 2001, and (inset) a sandshark attacks on Mars in Jerry Sohl's "The Invisible Enemy."



Soldier James Shigeta interrogated by Ebonite John Anderson in "Nightmare," a similar show to "Quality of Mercy." Inset: Original co-creator, Leslie Stevens, who died in April 1998.



Not even TWILIGHT ZONE was consistently as interesting visually as OUTER LIMITS.

"The problem is, as much as we all love the old TWILIGHT ZONES, most of them are twists-in-the-tales stories. After you've seen [an] episode after 20 times, you can't help but lose the impact.

"The first time we all heard the line, 'It's a cookbook!' it's pretty cool. But by the 20th time, it's not quite as cool. It's become something of an in-joke now. They were little half-hour morality plays. By and large, the TWILIGHT ZONE depended on twist endings. OUTER LIMITS was a real one-hour drama, more complex than TWILIGHT ZONE because it had more room to develop their stories. I think that's one reason why it stands up better. You're watching it for the cinematography, the complex story. They're not easily reducible to a joke ending like 'It's

a cookbook!'"

Pen Densham shares similar views. "I think they were the people who did science fiction and didn't make apologies for it. They gave us great graphic imagery to see what we were reading as kids put on the screen. I read [Robert A. Heinlein's] *The Puppetmasters*, I read John Wyndham's *The Day of the Triffids*, or [Eando Binder's] *I, Robot*. They were putting those images on the screen...unlike something like [Irwin Allen's] LOST IN SPACE, which was full of forced comedy and going for a junior audience.

"It was geared as [adult] science fiction. And it's riveting."

As Joseph Stefano becomes more active in OUTER LIMITS, it will claim its place as an extension of the original series. The two shows will coalesce into one unique body; a fitting evolution for these forms of things unknown. □



Alyssa Milano and Jason London get "Caught in the Act" by an alien that feeds on sex in an R-rated tale you'd never find on the original series.

classic OUTER LIMITS in the '60s, you go to Mars and there's an alien under the sand out there ('The Invisible Enemy') that's going to chew off your legs or something. But in the 1990's, LIMITS territory, the alien might be here, it might look like a beautiful woman and still might eat you!"

"The organism, the ooze—did you touch any of it?"
—Pete Claridge to Al Wells.

THE VOYAGE HOME

#15, 6/30/95. Written by Grant Rosenberg. Directed by Tibor Takacs.

Returning from a manned mission to the planet Mars, astronaut Pete Claridge (Michael Dorn) slowly comes to the realization that he and his crew, Al Wells and Ed Barkley (Matt Craven and Jay O. Sanders) may have brought aboard a shape-shifting alien. As they head towards Earth, Claridge begins to consider the dangers of allowing the alien to land on Earth.

It's quite clear on the outset that "Voyage Home" is ALIEN crossed with John Campbell's classic "The Thing (From Another World)" short story. As sincere as the filmmakers and actors may be, basically, there's nothing new here. We've seen it all before. At the end of the episode, what passes as a shape-shifting alien revealed, is a terrible bird-like creature that comes straight from a 1950's B-movie—effectively ruining the drama's believability.

"That was a very classic science fiction parable," said Richard Lewis. "It's typical of OUTER LIMITS and what people expect. I'm not a big spaceship kind of guy, but I think the emotional core of it was excellent. These guys, Matt Craven, Jay Sanders and Michael Dorn did a great job."

"Michael Dorn is a big STAR TREK person

STAR TREK's Michael Dorn stars as a Mars astronaut who realizes his returning ship harbors a dangerous alien in "The Voyage Home."



air for television. The brainchild of Leslie Stevens, THE OUTER LIMITS was a seriously adult anthological series that scrambled our television sets and pulled us into tales of science fiction, gothic horror and suspense. The series has given us a distinctly memorable form of storytelling. Stevens and his production team presented humans confronting aliens—often under weird and surreal conditions—imaginatively couched in atmospheric settings assisted by taut acting, directing, special effects, makeup and high-contrast black and white photography. But hidden in each and every story we were given a moral or witnessed an insight into an aspect of our humanity that could only be revealed under the unusual circumstances. Today, 30 years later, the original series continues to enthrall viewers during the occasional Turner Network marathons.

As the three Trilogy producers stood together among the 600 guests at the screening of the two-hour pilot, they probably had no idea what an adventure the next four years would be for them. Emmy awards and Cable ACE awards would be rare moments of recognition for a science fiction series' high quality and popular success—rarer still when you consider that the show is an anthology. In 1995, the Cable ACE awards acknowledged THE OUTER LIMITS in its first season as Best Dramatic Series, and director Stuart Gillard as Best Director for his work on "Sandkings." In 1996, the Cable ACE awards acknowledged the OUTER LIMITS again as Best Dramatic Series award. The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, who give out the Emmys, awarded Amanda Plummer in 1996 for "A Stitch in Time" as Best Guest Actress in a Drama Series.

Audiences catching the series on Showtime or in syndication have been treated to a wide variety of science fiction and horror-based stories. Samples of some of the provocative and chilling storylines treated on the show include tales about alien abductions, a telekinetically gifted child, a robot accused of murder, corpses that are possessed and reanimated by aliens, a monster

“OUTER LIMITS...was one of the nuggets of our library. We recognized its potential. It was an anthology we were going to do in a very adult way.”

—MGM-TV Pres. John Symes—



James Wilder is entranced by Jessica Steen in cold storage in second season's "The Refuge," written by Alan Brennert.

who kidnaps children, an astronaut lost on a distant planet, a woman who illegally has her unborn child genetically enhanced, a man pursued by Death incarnate, and a haunted house that swallows people.

To unscramble OUTER LIMITS' long road back to television after a 30 year absence, we have to step through Dr. Given's time portal once more and travel to the year 1983. There were actually a few ill-fated attempts to revive the title in a format different from an ongoing series. But MGM/UA asked Leslie Stevens for a feature idea and classic series director Gerd Oswald and Joseph Stefano also had their own film idea, which was taken to Paramount.

But TWILIGHT ZONE: THE MOVIE's failure at the box office stalled a successful fruition of this effort. In 1985, a "back door" pilot was proposed by ABC, because of the success of the ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS revival series.

But when CBS's new TWILIGHT ZONE and NBC's AMAZING STORIES failed, OUTER LIMITS came to a screeching halt once again, with a completed script unused. "There was only one serious attempt and that was in 1985," recalled Joseph Stefano. "By serious, I mean to the extent where you're actually having talks with people. I don't usually don't get involved in anything until they're very serious. Among attempts prior to that, Paramount wanted to do it as a movie at one point."

The legal ownership of the rights to THE OUTER LIMITS belonged to three parties: MGM/UA, creator/executive producer Leslie Stevens and producer/writer Joseph Stefano. But the studio had the upper hand and theirs' was the final say. "When you have two independent companies like mine and Leslie Stevens', and they're connected in a joint venture with the studio, the studio has the wildcard in the decision-making. In other words, someone has to say, 'This is what we're going to do' or 'This is not what we're going to do...' And in a three-way split, one person, usually the deficit financier, wields the bat.

continued on page 43

OUTER LIMITS

FEASIBILITY STUDY

Joe Stefano updates his classic for a '90s audience.

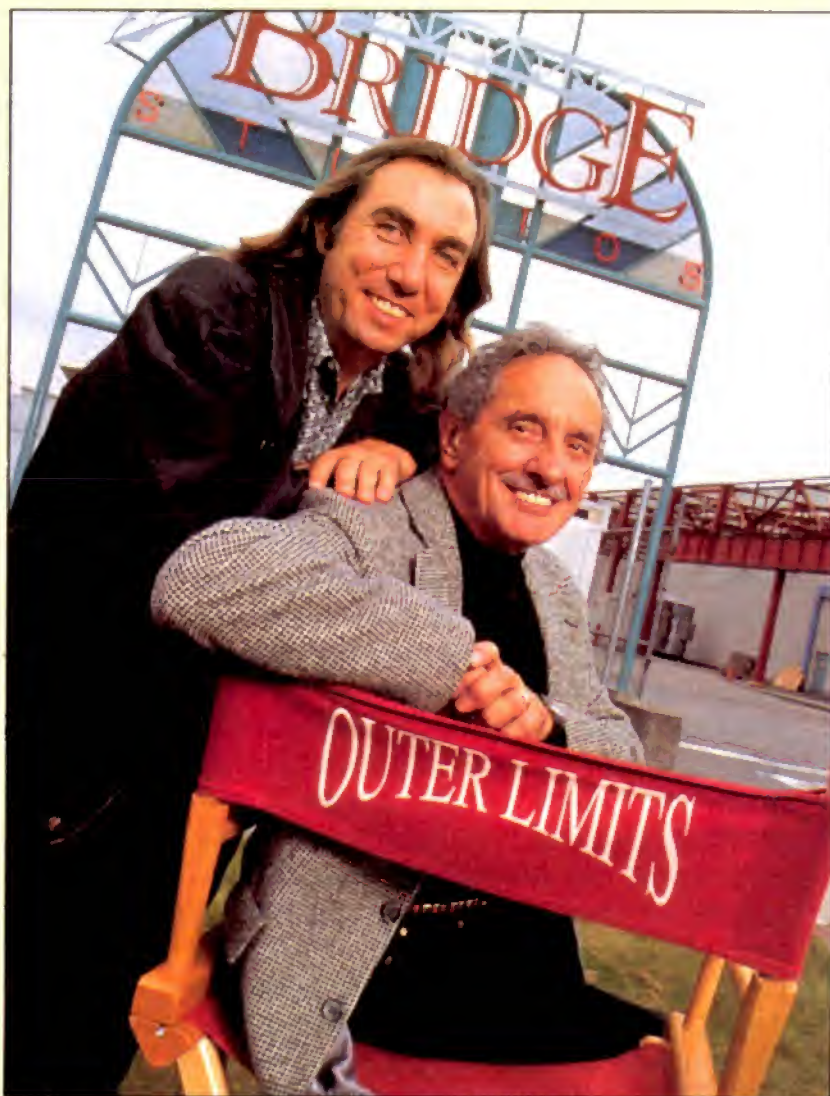
By Frank Garcia

Even before a single frame of film was exposed, the production of "A Feasibility Study" was an instant milestone in OUTER LIMITS history. After a 34-year break, writer/producer Joseph Stefano, who worked on the first season of the original 1963-65 OUTER LIMITS series, returned to a project that he considers "a centerpiece" of his career. With a mutual desire to work together, and on the suggestion of the executive producers of THE OUTER LIMITS, Stefano has reached back into his archives and pulled out the first of the 12 scripts he wrote for the original series, and updated it for the 1990s. That script, a highly respected and controversial story, was filmed in August 1963 and broadcast on the ABC television network on April 13, 1964, an episode directed by Byron Haskin. The most striking features of the "Feasibility" story is the startling, epic premise and its stunning, emotional conclusion, as a neighborhood from Earth, abducted to be slaves for an alien race, chooses death rather than subjugation.

As a demonstration of the impact of that ending 33 years ago, Joseph Stefano recalled the ABC networks' response. "The network's first thought was that the ending looked like mass suicide. They had looked beyond the heroics and the courage of the situation. They, the characters in the story, weren't doing it [infecting themselves] to save themselves from suffering—they were doing it to keep the rest of humanity on Earth. They knew that if they [the humans] failed, the aliens would take more people from Earth. So the core of it was much more clear when ABC saw the first cut, and

all questions stopped [from the network] about that aspect of it. "The episode turned out very effective. The reaction from audience and critics was incredibly good."

The original controversial, self-sacrificing ending, noted Stefano and series co-executive producer Sam Egan, remains in the remake. "There would be no point to redo this story without that powerful ending," said Egan. "Even in rehearsals when we were casting, every time we hear the line, 'I've taken my daughter's hand. Will someone take mine?' you get a chill down your spine because you realize its significance. It's human sacrifice that's involved. It's a



Screenwriter and original series producer Joseph Stefano (r) with Trilogy Entertainment chief and new series creator Pen Densham on the set of Stefano's "A Feasibility Study" remake in Vancouver.

and the head of the studio (John Symes) used to be at Paramount. He wanted a STAR TREK in OUTER LIMITS. That was smart. You want to mix 'n' match. For every 'Choice' you do, or a 'Conversion,' you want to do a classic science fiction tale. So, it's a good balance.

"After that episode, I stopped doing a lot of creature work. The problem is, (even) with the best intentions in the world, our budget and schedules are very hard to pull this off on a seven-and-a-half day schedule."

"God created a flawed man. I think I can do better."

—Dr. Stephen Ledbetter

"Your nanobots don't stop working on weekends."

—Andy Groenig to Dr. Ledbetter

THE NEW BREED

★★★

#16, 7/09/95. Written by Grant Rosenberg. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

As scientist Dr. Stephen Ledbetter (Richard Thomas) makes an announcement to the world that he's made a revolutionary breakthrough in the development of nanotechnology that can repair damaged cells, Ledbetter's future brother-in-law, Andy Groenig (Peter Outerbridge), learns that he's stricken with an incurable form of cancer. Desperate for survival, Andy sneaks into the lab one night and injects himself with a serum. The results are catastrophic as the tiny nanobots physically mutate Andy's DNA. When Ledbetter finds out what Andy's done, he's furious and tries to contain the damage done.

Not quite FRANKENSTEIN, but "The New Breed" does provide a new spin to the old story of scientific experiments gone wild. Up to this point in the series, "New Breed" is the sixth such scientific investigation that goes awry. Using the concept of nanotechnology as the impetus for the story provides an intriguing, "cutting edge" scientific arena to explore. Richard Thomas and Peter Outerbridge's performances are so fluid that without them, the episode could easily have crumbled. The special effects makeup is also excellent, including the final, disgusting charred remains.

But in the episodes' final scene, another entire story is just crying out to be born!

(Nanotechnology has become a popular form of story-telling in SF. Novelists Kevin J. Anderson, Greg Bear, Gregory Benford, Larry Niven, Kim Stanley Robinson and Neal Stephenson have all, in varying degrees and approaches, incorporated N-Tech into their stories.)

"I think that's a smart show. Peter Outerbridge was brilliant," said Richard Lewis. "For me, that's the most frightening episode we've done. That one got to me. I had nightmares about that. On a conceptual level, it's trying to heal someone who's dying and is frantic with desperation to try

Visual stylist Mario Azzopardi, who has directed some of the series finest episodes, made his OUTER LIMITS debut with "The New Breed."





Richard Thomas stars as a scientist whose break-through in nanotechnology can save his brother's life in "The New Breed."

anything. The science end of it is the body reinventing itself way beyond what he wanted. It's a really scary idea, somebody having an eye on the back of his head. 'Oh, my...god!' I thought we did that brilliantly. I thought that was done on a major feature level, in quality and technically."

"You are not crazy, believe me. This is the best thing that could happen to anyone!"
—Robert to Jennifer Winter

"We sent out this image of us—and they sent it back with an image of them."
—Robert to Sam Winter

THE MESSAGE

★★★

#17, 7/16/95. Written by Brad Wright. Directed by Joseph L. Scanlan.

After receiving an experimental implant, a deaf woman, Jennifer Winter (Marlee Matlin) begins to hear strange messages that compel her to write down arcane ones and zeros. She meets up with a kindly janitor, Robert (Larry Drake), who helps translate the message for her. Together, they come to realize that the message is from deep space and from aliens who seek their help.

Essentially, "The Message" is an intriguing premise with interesting casting, but the execution leaves much to be desired. Jennifer and Robert conveniently meet and Robert has all the right skills and knowledge to decode and address the alien's problems. Maybe it could not be condensed into a 44-minute film, but if Jennifer and Robert had a greater struggle in finding ways to fulfill the aliens' needs, possibly even bringing in other people into the secret, the story would have been more realistic and less of a contrivance. But the character's emotional journey is what makes the story satisfying and worthwhile. It is quite pleasing to see a talented actress like Marlee Matlin still find roles that can take advantage of her skills.

Larry Drake and Marlee Matlin star in "The Message," a script tailored to the deaf actress by co-executive producer Brad Wright.



very powerful moment."

The story's powerful climax was shot, because of production schedules and the timing of available locations, on the very first day of shooting, on March 21, 1997. "It'll be interesting to see audiences reactions [today]," said Stefano. "We've been to some strange places as a race since the first airing of 'A Feasibility Study.' We've seen some mass suicides, for entirely different reasons, since then. So the sensibilities today are different. If the people who watch the show see this is as an act of heroism, I think they'll have exactly the same reaction as audiences did 33 years ago."

As Sam Egan explained, the rationale behind producing the second remake (after Eando Binder's "I, Robot") of an OUTER LIMITS episode is simple. "We wanted to keep a tradition alive of keeping a strong connection with the original series. The fact that we still have the original creators of the series involved is a real bridge to the past.

"There's a lot to learn from a talent like Joe Stefano. He brings a lot of class and dignity and plain talent to our show today. He has a remarkable imagination. He's been something of a patriarch and an inspiration to all of the writers on the current show. That bridge to the past is very much alive and well. We're very proud to have him associated with the current series.

"In looking at the original episodes of the show, it struck us that 'Feasibility Study' would be a very strong candidate for an update and we felt it would be very timely for today. We felt the audience would be able to identify with the situation and the characters."

With Joseph Stefano's fresh interpretation of the story in hand, to find an actor to flesh out the leading role, filling the shoes of Sam Wanamaker in the original, the producers didn't have to look very far. They turned to one of Stefano's favorite players, David McCallum, an actor who twice appeared in the original series, in episodes "The Forms of Things Unknown" and "The Sixth Finger." Initially, the producers had intended to fill the cast of the show with original OUTER LIMITS alumnus from the 1960s as a "reunion" episode, but Canadian content regulatory rules prohibited this. "It would be outrageously expensive!" said Stefano.

Elated with McCallum's return to the series, Sam Egan felt

“We’ve been to some strange places since the first airing of ‘A Feasibility Study.’ We have seen some mass-suicides, for entirely different reasons...”

—Producer Joseph Stefano—

"the moment he walked on the set, he brought energy and passion. He's unbelievably handsome and I think he's a tremendous asset to the show. The fact that he did two of the original episodes is wonderful and I think it's really important that we have an original cast member from the first series [for this episode]. I can't think of anyone better for this role. He's an extraordinary presence. I

really enjoy his performance."

Noted McCallum, "It's another wonderful script that came through Joe Stefano. The great pleasure was to see him again today, alive and kicking and doing jolly well, and it's wonderful that this whole show is being recreated. It's my third script. It's a pleasure. It was interesting to find out that this part was [originally] played by Sam Wanamaker who was, before I came to America, a good friend." Also curious to note is that McCallum has acted with original "Feasibility" star David Opatoshu in at least two MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E. episodes in the 1960s.

"The most interesting thing about the script is how do you act a scene in which something happens which takes away every single concept of what you think life is all about," said McCallum. "When they drive down the road and come to the edge, basically the edge of the world, I mean, all of a sudden, the rest of the world has disappeared. How do you act that? What would be your reaction without making it ludicrous. It's kind of an interesting concept. I'm having a wonderful time."

Noted writer/producer Joseph Stefano about observing the filming, "It was strange, walking onto the set and seeing David again on THE OUTER LIMITS. It was like walking into a time warp!" quipped Stefano.

The remake sprung from series executive producer Pen Densham's request. "That got me excited," said Stefano. "I hadn't been in-

Sarah (Laura Harris) and a dying alien, fellow slaves when their entire block is transported to another planet. Makeup by XFX.





David McCallum, who appeared in two classic series episodes, as Joshua Hayward pleading with one of the Triunes to end the study. Effects makeup by Steve Johnson's XFX.

clined to write an episode since the series began two years ago, so this seemed a good way of writing an episode. The notion of re-doing today one of the scripts I did originally, was very intriguing, and 'Feasibility Study' was especially good because I always felt that we could never get the effects that I saw in my mind," said Stefano. "Most of the other shows with monsters in them, they were pretty satisfactory, but what was in my mind for 'Feasibility Study' and what I saw on film, were two different things. Effects-wise, we couldn't do it in those days. There was no way to cut out a piece of the neighborhood and take it away into the sky. We did the best we could. It worked for its time, but it was a show I wanted to see again for the 1990s, so it was a natural."

Noted Sam Egan, "One of the big changes in the updated story is that there is a second alien species on the moon of the planet that the neighborhood has been transported to," explained Sam Egan. "The host aliens, who are called the Triunes, are really startling and unusual. Their bodies are withered and have atrophied. They have chosen to work on their mental powers to the detriment of their physical abilities. They have these enormous heads in tiny, shriveled bodies that are attached to these futuristic life-support systems. But they don't care because they have other means of accomplishing their physical needs." And that's where the slaves come in from other planets.

The special effects makeup is by Steve Johnson and his Emmy award-winning XFX, Inc., corps of makeup artists. "Steve has one of the most challenging episodes he's ever done," said Egan. "We've got a lot more bells and whistles today in terms of visual effects and in 1990s [special effects makeup] prosthetics, all of the camera trickery that's part of the new technology. But, what it comes down to it in the end, is good

ideas and good storytelling which is the heart of science fiction and it just seems a natural to go back to the original series and [wonder] what's compelling then that would be compelling today?"

To realize Stefano's vision on the small screen, that job was given to Canadian director Ken Girotti who previously helmed two OUTER LIMITS episodes, "The Refuge" and "Falling Star."

Girotti was unaware of the original episode when he read Stefano's remake script, but immediately recognized its classic stature and quality. "We're telling the same story in a totally modern way."

Said Girotti, who was elated when David McCallum was cast in the lead role. "He's great. He's a consummate gentleman. I have the impression that he's very open to discussions about getting the scenes the best way it can be told. I enjoy the process with the actor. And David is really into that."

"I don't think the idea is to improve on it. I like to think I'm not conceited enough to think I can improve on it. We're just telling the story in a different way, appealing to a sensibility 30 years later. Certainly, we couldn't tell the same story in the same way today, and expect the audience to respond in the same way. The way that the language of television today is totally different, the way stories get told is totally different. You respond to the same emotional chords, you're just playing different tunes to get there."

The big challenge that faces him as a director, said Girotti, is to illustrate "the sheer power we're trying to portray with these aliens being able to carve out a hunk of a six-block neighborhood and lift it up into the sky. There's an epic quality to that even though in the story we're really just dealing with a six-block neighborhood and a little lair where the aliens are.

"That's a Richard Lewis kind of show. I'm probably a little soft. I'm not Mr. Hi-Tech Hardware kind of guy," chuckled Richard Lewis. "To me that's a powerful, emotional story. Marlee was delightful and she should have won an ACE award. That's how brilliant I thought she was. She wanted to work on the show, so we created a story for her. It's maybe a little like [Astronomer Carl Sagan's novel] *Contact*."

"It's a message in a bottle." —Lewis.

"You want me to defend this robot? This 'synthetic human?'"
—lawyer Thurman Carter to Mina Link

I ROBOT

★★★

#18, 7/23/95. Based on the short story by Eando Binder. Written by Alison Lea Bingeman. Directed by Adam Nimoy.

When an experimental robot named Adam is accused of killing his creator, Charles Link, lawyer Thurman Cutler (Leonard Nimoy) is hired by the scientist's daughter, Mina Link (Cyndy Preston), to defend him in court. At first, Cutler is reluctant, but he soon becomes intrigued by the issues at hand: Does a robot have emotion? Is he capable of homicide?

It was exciting to consider 'I, Robot' as the show's first direct remake from the classic series with Leonard Nimoy returning to a story he presented to the airwaves 31 years ago. This time, he's directed by his progeny, Adam Nimoy. Taking on the role of the defense attorney instead of the original's eager newspaper reporter, Nimoy delivers a polished performance. Son Adam's direction is deft and the robot's funky and updated for the 1990s. A good effort from all departments.

"I thought it was a lot of fun having Leonard Nimoy play another role in this one, from the one he played in the original," said co-executive producer Jonathan Glassner. "With his son directing it, it's a real interesting dynamic to watch. They were both extremely into it."

The origin of the idea for doing the remake came from the Nimoy's, said Glassner. "We were contacted by Leonard or Adam's agent. Leonard wanted to play the other role than what he did in the original series," which was playing a reporter. "And that he would do it if Adam directed it. So, we checked out Adam's directing and we thought it was good, so we said, 'Great! Go for it!'"



Leonard Nimoy defends Adam Link in court in "I, Robot" a story a young Nimoy appeared in when adapted on the original series in the '60s.

"I believe my son's spirit is trapped inside that house!"
—Mrs. Linda Tillman

"Well, it sure looks haunted!"
—Levi Mitchell

IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

★★1/2

#19, 7/30/95. Written by Manny Coto. Directed by Tibor Takacs.

When a woman, Lynda Tillman (Alberta Watson), finds out her son has disappeared into

what apparently is a "haunted house," she seeks the help of a skeptical researcher, Levi Mitchell, played by STAR TREK's Dwight Schultz, who agrees to investigate the matter. As they spend the night together in the house, they stumble into a hidden laboratory where they find research notes left behind by the previous owner who made a startling discovery. Soon, they realize the house is literally "alive" and has been "eating" anyone who enters into the doorway.

Once again, this is a story that could have been a POLTERGEIST but instead found a home under the covers of an OUTER LIMITS plot. "If These Walls" could have been thrown out as an inappropriate tale for the series if it were not for the scientific background stitched into it.

There's a resemblance in this plotting to J. Michael Straczynski's script for a syndicated 1988 TWILIGHT ZONE episode called "Something in the Walls" starring Deborah Raffin as a woman at a mental hospital has recurring visions of human shapes and faces stretching out from wallpaper, etc.

Dwight Schultz gives a pretty good performance assisted by eerily haunting special effects of human figures and faces stretching out of a wall. Director Manny Coto sketches an interesting, unique take on the traditional "haunted house" story. In fact, the final scene is remarkably stunning. If there's anything that OUTER LIMITS is really good at—it's endings!

"We got a request from the studio to do a haunted house story," said Richard Lewis.

"It's a very ambitious show. Technically, the first version of the effects were ridiculous. Part of the reason they brought our [Trilogy] company into work on the show is to not settle. What I got back from Canada was awful. It needed a lot more work. I kept pushing and spending more money until I was satisfied that it looked real. That's one of the biggest things we can contribute to this show, and that's continually setting the bar higher. We keep challenging our producing staff and ourselves from the start."



STAR TREK's Dwight Schultz plays a psychic investigator who finds a haunted house that's literally alive in "If These Walls Could Talk."

"I'm part of something, Doctor, and I can't remember what it is!"

—Senator Adams to Dr. McKenna

BIRTHRIGHT

★★★

#20, 8/13/95. Written by Michael Berlin and Eric Estrin. Directed by William Fruet.

When U.S. senator Richard Adams (Perry King), suffers a head injury, x-rays taken at the hospital by Dr. McKenna (Mimi Kuzyk) reveal startling abnormalities of his physical body. And when Adams is pursued by mysterious men, he runs but eventually returns to McKenna for help. Together, they try to unravel a mystery that surrounds Adams' physiology. The deeper that McKenna and Adams investigate, the more they realize that Adams' upbringing and life on Earth is not what he believes. Adams comes to understand that Earth's very future is at stake if he doesn't take

"This is one of the biggest budgeted episodes done this year simply because of the size of the visual effects that are involved. Any time we go to the edge of the world, there's a shimmering barrier, a force field that keeps people inside this little neighborhood enclave. On the other side of that is an otherworldly landscape that we have to create."

Visual special effects artist Steve Anker and his team worked together to create the fantastic images of a six-block residential neighborhood resting upon an alien environment, as Sam Egan explains. "The first act is the consternation and confusion by the neighborhood and by the end of it our hero of the episode sees, along with the audience, exactly what the predicament that the neighborhood is in. And that's when we see what we call 'the mushroom shot.'

"One of the most exciting shots is a pullback when we see the entire neighborhood perched 40 stories in the air on this mushroom rock with a vast, sterile terrain of this moon of a distant world below."

Egan also noted that unlike the original episode, there won't be any fog in this story. "We stay away from fog. In fact, what we'll have is the barrier which our hero will come upon at the edge of the world and it's this shimmering, translucent barrier. Upon closer inspection as you look through this transparent barrier, you [have a] vantage point and you realize geographically where the neighborhood has been transported."

This very shot, said actor David McCallum, is the moment that he anticipates. "I can't wait to see that shot—of the community that has been uprooted and stuck on a mushroom in the center of some weird planet somewhere. As far as I'm concerned, that shot is the main motivation of my character. That's what he's presented with."

"I think the difference between the 1960s and now where OUTER LIMITS is concerned is the sophistication of the special effects."

Girotti, who also stood behind the cameras on TEKWAR and POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY, agreed. "If you took a wide angle shot of this planet, you'd have a horizon with a grouping of these tall, strange looking mushrooms with little enclaves of little civilizations on top of them. And below it is a lunar, spartan landscape of nothing."

However, as Girotti pointed out, the focus of the story is not special effects but individual and group reactions by the human residents to their situation. "The emotional



McCallum carries his ill daughter Sarah and encounters the force field which contains the Earth contingent. Effects by Steve Anker.

center of the story, as I see it, is the relationship between Joshua Hayward and his daughter Sarah. Suddenly, they're confronted with the ultimate choice. Whether to do the altruistic thing, to save humanity, and thereby reconciling themselves with each other. Look at Joshua and Sarah's relationship as having a sort of resonance to the relationship with the larger community when they all decide to do the right thing and save Earth."

Stefano felt it was necessary to change the characters in the rewrite. "Originally, we had a man and his wife and their problems, but since 1963 those problems have been done repeatedly—i.e., the woman who doesn't feel that she should just be a wife and mother, and wants a career. So I changed it to a daughter. And the character David McCallum is playing is still a control freak, but instead of his wife, he's trying to control his daughter."

Noted Sam Egan, "Joseph has given us a [greater] sense of panic, confusion and mistrust from person to person. The theme of the story is really about the breakdown in connections between people. It's mirrored in the father/daughter relationship between Joshua and Sarah and David McCallum and Laura Harris the actors. Also, the neighborhood at large...they don't really know one another."

"There's a line in it that says, 'You pay for privacy and you get anonymity in the bargain.' It's about neighbors who are isolated from one another until a crisis brings them together." □

"MGM/UA would not give up the property to Paramount, which was certainly understandable," noted Stefano "Yet, they were not able to do it themselves. At this point, we had serious talks with ABC. The problem, the deal-breaker on that was simply the network's unwillingness to go ahead with what they originally thought might be a good idea. That often happens. There's no real defining moment when the deal goes down."

Stefano noted that the ABC attempt was going to be a television series that was very much like the original. "There was no big point of disagreement," said Stefano. "It wasn't someone saying, 'Let's have a continuing character,' and we said 'No!' It wasn't anything like that. It went down for other reasons. Sometimes it takes very long for the people involved to get into another project."

The matter remained dormant for almost 10 years. Flash forward to 1991, the once grand and prestigious MGM/UA film and television studio was in a financial crisis. MGM-TV shut down with their final production, THIRTYSOMETHING. The studio was being auctioned off in pieces to a succession of different owners. It looked like the end of an era. But, in 1994, when Frank Mancuso took charge of the studio, after he bought it from the Credit Lyonnais Bank in France, he had a strong desire to reactivate the television arm. To do this, he hired John Symes away from Paramount and appointed him President of MGM-TV. His next step was to look at existing properties owned by the studio and ask, "Which of these have a name recognition that we could bring back and rebuild the TV department?"

THE OUTER LIMITS was a property that Mancuso felt was the most recognizable of all the available titles. "In January 1994, I was hired to start up the television company again," recalled Symes. "One of the principal architects of putting the whole thing together was the fact that we had a deal with Showtime [the pay cable network] that called for the production of a number of movies for them, but also...OUTER LIMITS. In return for that,

“Joe Stefano has been a huge fan of the show. He blessed Trilogy going off to produce it. Both he and Leslie Stevens have been incredibly supportive.”

—MGM-TV Pres. John Symes—



Phyllis Love and one of the Luminoids from the original 1964 "Feasibility Study," given a new life third season.

they had exclusive access to theatrical pictures we make for exhibition in pay television."

Reportedly, this meant Showtime would get 150 films over seven years from MGM. "Out of that, we were able to come up with a novel distribution idea, which was to have the show play first on Showtime and go almost immediately into syndication to give it a larger audience. Since that time, we've been able to deliver a first class show, and the return not only for our investment, in time and money but certainly Trilogy's investment in bringing forth the very best shows...for Showtime.

"OUTER LIMITS, which was [originally] a United Artists television show, was one of the nuggets of our library," explained Symes. "We recognized the potential of it. We really thought that, at first, it was best suited for pay television. It was an anthology we were going to do in a

very adult way. And once we were able to see a level of success in pay television, we were convinced that this was a show that would additionally work for a mainstream audience. That's why we decided to take the show into syndication."

In an unprecedented collaboration, MGM-TV, Trilogy Entertainment, Atlantis Films (a Canadian production company), and Showtime joined forces to produce the first two seasons of 44 one-hour episodes. Later, the show was received so well, an additional 44 episodes were ordered, bringing the series episode total to four seasons and 88 shows. And now, with its fourth season completed, the outer edges of the series' boundaries has yet to be explored. The show is renewed for two more years (consisting of 22 stories per season) bringing the library catalog to 132 episodes. This means loyal fans will continue to enjoy new, eclectic science fiction into the year 2000 and possibly beyond.

Returning a 1960s black and white SF anthology series to television merely required certain parties to seriously commit

continued on page 46

immediate action.

It's always fun to have stories that begin as a mystery and evolve into a "things-are-not-what-they-seem" situation, particularly when the revelation revolves around the very nature of your being, as Senator Adams discovers. With good performances by King and Kuzyk, and weird alien makeup by Steve Johnson and his XFX Inc. crew, Berlin and Estrin are daring enough to take the story into an ultimate conclusion that episodic television wouldn't dare tread. And this is one of the strengths of the series.

"I'll tell you one fun story on that one," grinned Jonathan Glassner. "The guys who wrote it, Eric Estrin and Michael Berlin, came up with the general concept of the story. We had one of these situations, which doesn't happen often, where we didn't have a script. We had a hole in the schedule. And we had to come up with one very quickly.

"Manny Coto and I literally stood out in the freezing cold on the set one day, while we were shooting, pacing back and forth. The crew were staring at us like we were crazy. We were making up the story, writing it down as fast as we could. Neither of us was directing, but we were just kind of on the set observing and overseeing things. While they were setting up, we're chattering to each other...

"Um, ah, so, the Senator walks up to the hospital and it turns out he's got more organs than he's supposed to have!"

"Okay! That's good! That's great!"

"Another shot got going, we watched the shot, and then we talked again..."

"So, he's in the hospital, we'll go from there..."

"Basically, we came up with the whole outline of the story that night. We called Estrin and Berlin the next morning and they put their two cents worth in."



Doctor Mimi Kuzyk discovers startling abnormalities examining U. S. Senator Perry King after he suffers a head injury in "Birthright."

"I've come to the inescapable conclusion that the United States, and quite possibly the entire world, is being overrun by aliens." —Randall Strong

THE VOICE OF REASON ★★

#21, 8/20/95. Written by Brad Wright. Excerpts by Manny Coto, Eric Estrin & Michael Berlin, Rob Forsyth, Grant Rosenberg, David Schow and Melinda Snodgrass. Directed by Neill Fearnley.

A government investigator, Randall Strong (Gordon Clapp), appears before a high-level, clandestine government committee headed by a mysterious man named Thornwell (Daniel J. Travanti), to deliver a shocking report in which he claims the Earth has been invaded by aliens.

Patiently listening to Strong, the committee hears evidence that reveals the existence of "Sandkings" insect creatures, of a haunted house that absorbs people, of a young woman who was possessed by an alien creature, and of a priest with strange healing powers. Strong goes on to express a belief that the Mars space probe returning to Earth

was not destroyed by accident, but as a result of the fact that an alien had invaded the ship and replaced its crew. Strong also contends that a U.S. senator's x-ray charts reveal that he's not human at all—but alien. Finally, Strong reveals the existence of a haunted house that "imploded" after having physically "absorbed" numerous visitors.

When the committee members start to express reservations over Strong's story and evidence, Strong becomes more agitated and starts to suspect they're holding back something.

This is what's commonly known in the industry as a "clips" show. When the budget's down and the production needs to create product, a "bottle" show is conjured. Here, screenwriter Brad Wright cleverly sews together seven episodes as having taken place in the same universe. The "clips" in question come from the previously produced episodes, "Sandkings," "Caught in the Act," "Birthright," "The Voyage Home," "Corner of the Eye," "If These Walls Could Talk," and "The New Breed."

Usually, clips serves only to pad old footage to kill running time and save money. Practically, every TV show in television history has them, from THE DICK VAN DYKE SHOW to STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION. But Wright found a good stand-alone story in which to append the clips to fill out the episode. It helps a lot, too, to have high caliber actors such as Daniel Travanti and Gordon Clapp verbally fencing with each other.

"I think that was very challenging work by Brad Wright because, in fact, to do a clips show for an anthology series is, when you think about it, almost an impossible task," said Neill Fearnley. "He came up with a marvelous story that has nothing to do with the clips, per se. It played very nicely on its own, yet it allowed the clips to fill up the time to allow for [us to save money]. We were able to tell a nice story, that as a director, I literally could shoot in order from the first to the last shot. And we told a nice character piece around which we hinged with the clips elements, which really, only lent themselves to enhance the primary story."

Said Richard Lewis, "I think it was a really interesting, emotional journey by this paranoid, delusional character that Gordon Clapp played who is convinced the government is holding secrets. In many ways, it was kind of an X-FILES. There was an intensity that THE X-FILES doesn't generally operate on."

SECOND SEASON

"How good are you?"

—Givens to Pratt

"The best."

—Pratt's reply to Givens

A STITCH IN TIME

★★★★

#22, 1/14/96. Written by Steven Barnes. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

A highly disturbed university professor Theresa

Policewoman Michelle Forbes (l) catches time travelling serial killer Amanda Plummer in "A Stitch in Time," the series' finest show to date.



OUTER LIMITS

THE WRIGHT STUFF

As writer-producer, Brad Wright is not afraid of taking risks.

By Frank Garcia

"Brad Wright is one of the best writers of this decade—I would even figure, in the next. Going through my notes on all the scripts that I read and sent back to MGM, I find that I keep mentioning Brad Wright. His scripts always read fabulously. They're structured poetically. Damn good work."

—Joseph Stefano, producer of the original and consultant to the new OUTER LIMITS.



Wright, co-executive producer and master of the cost-saving bottle show.

human experience as long as there's a twist and something amazing happens in the story."

Wright is a big fan of science fiction. "I've read a lot of them, [Isaac] Asimov and [Robert A.] Heinlein. I think that they've covered so much territory. I think a little bit in terms of their universe for some things or a little bit from Heinlein, mix it with [Larry] Niven, and nobody knows the difference!"

Co-executive producer Brad Wright is a Canadian screenwriter and former playwright whose fertile imagination is responsible for giving THE OUTER LIMITS some of its very best scripts. In the first two years of the series, Wright speedily rose in the ranks of the production hierarchy to bring his unique—and talented—stamp to the series.

With a "Light Brigade" spaceship hanging ominously overhead and with a noisy walkie-talking squawking in the background, Wright sat down in his office at The Bridge Studios in Burnaby, British Columbia, where the series is filmed, to talk about his adventures in THE OUTER LIMITS. Wright's in a bright mood this day. The conversation is punctuated with frequent laughter from Wright as he responds to questions.

"I think people watch OUTER LIMITS to go into a different world to follow a character in a science fiction experience that they don't see on any other kind of television. One of the best ways that we can, as writers, describe to other writers what OUTER LIMITS is, is by saying what it isn't. It isn't a cop show. It isn't a medical show. It's a show that can be anything in the

Wright made his entry into THE OUTER LIMITS with the OUTBREAK-like tale "Blood Brothers," and after completing the script of Richard Lewis's story concept "The Conversion," he was offered the position of executive story consultant, which eventually became supervising producer during the second season. Other scripts for the first season presented unique tales: a pulse-pounding "bottle" drama ("Quality of Mercy"), a poetic mystery ("The Message"), and an aliens-are-among-us challenge ("The Voice of Reason").

Returning from vacation during the series hiatus, with the second season ahead of him, Wright adapted Larry Niven's classic, Hugo award-winning short story "Inconstant Moon." Later, Wright conjured up a "Trial By Fire" for actor Robert Foxworth as the President of the United States. Near the end of the season, inspiration struck again, and in a close collaboration with series production designer Steve Geaghan, Wright carved out a sequel to "Quality of Mercy" and the reappearance of actor Robert Patrick to the series in the space adventure, "The Light Brigade." At this stage in the series' history, Wright became co-executive producer as "Light



The world is dead or dying after a doomsday cult unleashes a deadly virus in fourth season's "The Vaccine," Wright's tale of a nurse who must choose those who will survive.

Brigade" went before the cameras, replacing Scott Shepherd.

Wright's background and professional growth as a working playwright in Toronto, Canada, and an actor throughout his 20s, served to hone his skills for THE OUTER LIMITS. But to arrive where he is now, Wright endured his own personal 'trials by fire' as either a writer, co-producer or story editor on different television productions.

"Not until my wife and I decided to have children did I get into writing for the screen," explained Wright. "I wrote a couple of spec screenplays. And they got into the community, as they do. And I was offered a job as assistant story editor on NEON RIDER [a Canadian drama series starring Winston Rekert].

"We were having a baby in two weeks, and I said to my wife, 'What are we going to do here?' and she said, 'You'd better take [the NEON RIDER job].' Just after our baby was born, we spent one night in the house and the next day we packed up and moved to British Columbia.

"I spent several months just rewriting scripts on NEON RIDER and then I ended up writing for the last 10 episodes of the first season. Ultimately, I wrote almost half that they ever shot. I did a lot of writing. It was hard work, but it was a good way to learn."

After five seasons on NEON RIDER, Wright devoted his energies to a variety of Canadian-produced drama television series. "I wrote a few HARBOUR NIGHTS, MOM P.I.'s, and a couple of THE ODYSSEY's," he said.

Other forays for Wright included writing stints on the genre series HIGHLANDER, FOREVER KNIGHT and the two-hour premiere episode of Trilogy Entertainment's sister series, POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY.

"I was enjoying a freelance lifestyle, and

then I got offered one OUTER LIMITS ['Blood Brothers'], and then they asked me to do another, and on the basis of the second one ['The Conversion'], they offered me a staff position."

Today, in addition to sharing producing duties with others on THE OUTER LIMITS, Wright joined his colleague Jonathan Glassner in co-developing and co-executive producing another new Showtime cable series: STARGATE SG-1.

Being a producer on an anthology series is just something that happens to writers when they've been on staff long enough, Wright said, "That's a good thing. You shepherd your vision all the way through. You do the script, you prep it, you help cast it, you help to cut it the way that you want it. At the same time you want to make sure that you accept everyone else's vision as part of the mix, because if you just say, 'No, no! This is the way I see it!' you're not going to get a very good episode. You have to let everyone else do their jobs the way they should do them.

"I think of myself as a writer/writer-producer, not a producer/writer-producer," Wright said.

Wright identified a few keys to the success of THE OUTER LIMITS' latest incarnation. "I'm proud of a lot of our shows because we're trying to achieve so much," said Wright. "This is not an ordinary television series. We're trying to do a little movie every week. We are working on entirely new casts and sets every week. We can't fall back on what a normal series can do, which is the strength of their leads...and the set designer for standing sets, and so the only way to try to do that is to risk—and occasionally, you fail when you risk—and so I'm not ashamed of any of what I perceive to be a 'failure,' because you have to try to do those things in order to do excellent work. □

Givens (Amanda Plummer) builds a time machine and uses it to assassinate convicted serial killers before the crimes are committed. As a result, the investigating FBI agent Jamie Pratt (Michelle Forbes) is baffled by a string of murders using a weapon that hasn't been built yet. But, even as Givens tries to cover her tracks between alternate universes, Pratt manages to continue suspecting after her.

Like "Quality of Mercy," "Stitch" is one of THE OUTER LIMITS' finest hours. Intense and interesting acting by Forbes and Plummer, aided by taut direction from Azzopardi, and powerful, compelling themes brought forth by teleplay writer Barnes all come together beautifully.

This is one of those scripts where the viewer really has to pay attention to the details and follow the events as the universe changes with every action that Givens makes when she returns from a visit from the past. It's a script that expresses the wishes of anyone who's ever been physically assaulted. It also raises the philosophical question: Is Theresa Givens a murdering assassin deserving to die for her sins, or is she doing good by preventing the tragedies that she knows are going to happen?

And then, consider the chilling ending with Jamie Pratt, that ends with a bang.

"In terms of capital punishment, it's a good intellectual debate," said Richard Lewis. "People feel very strongly one way or another. This is an extension of that. If you knew people who would do horrible things to you and your family, if you had the opportunity to stop them before they committed the crime, would you?"

"That episode I saw with Amanda Plummer, I really thought was one of the best hours of television I had ever seen!" declared actor Nick Mancuso.

See sidebar, page 27.



Android Nick Mancuso goes beyond the bounds of his robotic future society by recreating a living human from a strand of hair in "Resurrection."

"You can tell Moloch that his inquisition is a waste of time. There is no human life on this planet."

—Martin-GX21 to Military Androids

"Man proved himself to be the ultimate aggressor—he concluded himself. Therefore we must defend against the second coming of Man. It is our Directive—It is our destiny!"

—Moloch to the Android Council

RESURRECTION

★★★1/2

#23, 1/14/96. Written by Chris Brancato. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

In a robotic society in the far-flung future, the human race is extinct. One day a robotic council member, Martin (Nick Mancuso), and his colleague Alicia (Heather Graham) get together, and using a strand of hair, recreate a living human whom they call Cain. The robots detest humans and as soon as they suspect one lives again, Cain's lifecycle is in

danger of being cut short. Cain learns rapidly but he also comes to realize that there was a purpose to his birth. And that's to get into the Grid Room and shut down the robots.

Surprisingly original and entertaining, "Ressurrection" does have, as director Azzopardi noted, a European feel and mood—and that's good. A story such as this widens the landscape of stories that can be told on the show. Most notable to point out is Azzopardi's refreshingly deliberate pacing, John Van Tongeren's sweeping, romantic score and the costumes.

What's also fascinating is to watch actors Nick Mancuso and Heather Graham deliver "flat" unemotional performances and yet intellectually comprehend the talent they possess masked underneath the role.

Innobotics, the corporation from "Valerie 23" resurfaces in this drama.

"It was a very ambitious episode of television, where we're pulling out all stops and showing ... what the future might be like," observed Richard Lewis. "Alien military soldiers. It's like trying to do STAR WARS on a TV scale. I think the emotional core of the story worked.

"It's Adam and Eve part two, separated by about 3,000 years. It's a good allegory. A stylish, European, ambitious show. It's a Ridley Scott kind of an episode."



Catherine Mary Stewart and Alan Ruck with genetically enhanced but deformed superchild Ryan Slater in "Unnatural Selection."

"If I'm obsolete, what will happen to our son when he's my age? Unless we go through with this thing, he'll be a second-class citizen."

—Howard Sharp to his wife Joanne.

UNNATURAL SELECTION ★★★

#24, 1/19/96. Written by Eric A. Morris. Directed by Joseph L. Scanlan.

A young couple, Joanne and Howard Sharp (Catherine Mary Stewart and Alan Ruck) decide to use a new (and illegal) medical technique to genetically enhance the traits of their unborn baby. After careful thinking, they decide to go through with the procedure. But when the Sharps' best friends next door start to act strangely, Joanne begins to worry. Later, she discovers their friend's child did not die some time ago but is still alive and living in their basement. He too was a "genetically enhanced" child, but has become monstrous due to a side effect of the enhancement: Genetic Rejection Syndrome. As a result, the Sharps begin to panic.

If there's one word to describe this episode, it would probably be daring! This is one of those stories where the writer has taken medical advances and has projected it into a speculative future fiction. The results of such an exercise can sometimes be startling, as it is in this case. With our society very emotionally involved and divided over the abortion issue, stories like this can serve to provoke thought and create discussion. Science fiction functions at its best when it serves to illuminate the real world. As a

to recreating the show again, in this case, MGM/UA, Showtime Cable, and a solid syndication distribution deal.

And once John Symes hand-picked the Trilogy Entertainment Group as the production company that would actually make the series, it became more than just a dream that television sets across America would once again begin scrambling erratically. The 44-episode order from Showtime was a rare, confident request that surprised many in Hollywood. [Previously, director Steven Spielberg managed to convince the NBC TV network to run his series AMAZING STORIES for two years in 1985.]

"It was not very difficult," assured Symes. "Joe Stefano has been an incredible fan of the show. He blessed Trilogy going off to produce it. Both he and Leslie Stevens have been incredibly supportive of the show, not only on the standpoint of giving us continual feedback and encouragement as to what it is we were

doing, but they were big supporters of the end result of the show. And could not have been bigger fans of the show, in fact."

"Everything was right," Stefano agreed. "MGM wanted to do it, Showtime wanted to do it. Everything fell into place. There was no reason for Leslie or I to say no.

"When there's a commitment from someone—'We'll put money into this; this is what we're going to invest in,' then it becomes something worth talking about."



With the constellations finally aligned for an OUTER LIMITS revival, everyone involved was ecstatic. "Once we were able to deliver the show and once we got the creative acknowledgement from audiences and critics, it's now become a real tentpole product not only for Showtime but for MGM Television," remarked Symes.

"It allowed us to get going, without a lot of creative interference from Showtime. It allowed co-executive producers Jonathan Glassner and Brad Wright and all the directors and producers to put the show together

“We felt that we would be best off to take the heritage of the original series. It is not an accident that this show done 30 years ago is still being enjoyed.”

—Exec. Prod. Pen Densham—



Alex McArthur as fourth season's "Josh," a young man with mysterious powers who's pursued by tabloids and the military.

for us."

For insights closer to the ground floor of filmmaking, executive producer Pen Densham recalled that the notion of returning OUTER LIMITS to television occurred even before John Symes stepped foot into the MGM/UA boardroom. "I think Frank [Mancuso] and John were in discussions about John heading up the TV division. In those discussions, John had said if Frank had wanted to reenergize THE OUTER LIMITS, he already had the people working with him, which was our company and myself. John had developed a number of projects with us when he was at Paramount. We had wanted to work together for some period of time. But, he didn't know for a fact that he would then be coming over here. I think he'd probably seen SPACE RANGERS [a Trilogy series for CBS that ran for six episodes in 1987] and had probably been aware of LIFEPOD [a Fox TV movie loosely based on Alfred Hitch-

cock's 1944 film LIFEBOAT]. He was aware of our interest in developing very imaginative, high quality television. I suggested to Mancuso that he explore this with us. I then remember having a meeting with Frank very early in the process about how we would approach THE OUTER LIMITS. A significant aspect of that meeting was whether or not we should take that show and make it with on-going characters."

Surprisingly, this was the first "take" on the approach for the show. Chairman Mancuso had been influenced by a series he had been involved with several years earlier at Paramount, FRIDAY THE 13TH, which had a semi-anthological format. Densham was requested to creatively explore how he would update OUTER LIMITS for the 1990s. He started by viewing episodes of the original series. "I discussed with two or three people who have a real valid, deep understanding of television and are tremendous fans of the genre," said Densham. "I asked their opinions of the OUTER LIMITS. By taking kind of a consensus from these people whom I knew and trusted, I came to the decision that I would not sup-

continued on page 55

OUTER LIMITS

QUALITY OF MERCY

Writer Brad Wright on creating a top show for a budget price.

By Frank Garcia

Screenwriter Brad Wright takes full advantage of his roots as a playwright in this taut, two-character "bottle" drama confined to an alien prison cell location. Starring actors Robert Patrick and Nikki deBoer, "Quality of Mercy" sends us to an alien moon where a soldier engaged in a galactic war against aliens has been captured. He's dragged mercilessly into a crystalline cave dungeon where he discovers a young, dark-haired female cadet, also a prisoner. As Major John Skokes (Patrick) tries to find a way to escape, Cadet Bree (deBoer) is taken away repeatedly by the alien captors only to return each time looking more and more like one of the aliens. The drama of this superbly acted, designed and directed vignette is capped by a surprising twist ending.

The origin of this script, according to Wright, was prompted partially by desperation. "'Quality of Mercy' is a show where I can actually remember the moment I thought of it, and I have no idea where it came from! I had accepted the job to do the show, to go on staff, but I had just written a movie. I was flying, on my way to Vietnam, to do location scouting. I knew the day that I was starting on staff and I wanted to have a story! Out of the blue, I thought, 'Okay. An alien prison.' And then, 'They're changing her.' I remember I just smiled and wrote, 'They're changing me back' on a piece of paper, which I still have somewhere. It said something like: Man. Woman. Alien Prison. Inter-galactic war. We're losing bad. They're



Robert Patrick (TERMINATOR 2) as Major John Skokes, thrown into an alien prison cell in first season's "Quality of Mercy," a superb one-set "bottle" show written by Brad Wright.

changing her into one of them. In the end, "They're changing me back."

When Wright joined the show he pitched the story idea to producers Jonathan Glassner and Manny Coto. "I suggested it could be done in one room. Because that's called a 'bottle show.' It's a great way to save money on production. That's kind of my specialty. I love writing that. It's my playwriting experience, I suppose."

Maximizing the use of the 'bottle' show

couple, Catherine Mary Stewart and Alan Ruck are an appealing and realistic couple who are given this unique opportunity. Even without the SF element of genetic engineering, consider that today there are children born with physical deformities and once you add new technological ways to manipulate the conception or birthing process, there comes with that, additional dangers...

"I think we went headstrong into the abortion arena!" exclaimed Richard Lewis. "Today you can select the sex of your child. If your child is carrying some illnesses, you can choose not to have them. Basically, you can start to eliminate individuality and distinctiveness in children. Right now it's being done for reasons relating to illnesses or afflictions that would be very threatening to the child's life. All you have to do is extrapolate slightly, which we did in this episode. (Do) you want a child that is more intelligent, or a better athlete?"

"The question is where are we crossing the line? I understand in many Moslem or Arabic cultures, there is a real desire to have boys. The tradition in their culture is that if a female is born, sometimes they're left out to die because the father wants a son. I know there are clinics here in Los Angeles where people come from the Middle East who come here for sex selection. They're very picky. Do you want a boy or a girl? What we're doing is taking that to the next level to a couple who wants to have a child, wants to make sure the child has more potential than they have in their own genes."

"Conspiracies? Death rays? Murdering innocent people? Have you flipped? Where'd you dream this stuff up?"

—Newspaper editor to Carter Jones

I HEAR YOU CALLING

★★1/2

#25, 1/26/96. Based on a short story by Catherine Weber. Teleplay by Scott Shepherd. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

Journalist Carter Jones (Ally Sheedy) investigates a series of strange disappearances that could be murder. At the scene of every incident, charred or burnt marks are left on the ground, possibly remnants of human bodies. The further Jones investigates, the more she comes to realize that a mysterious man (Michael Sarrazin) using a strange ray-gun device has been vaporizing humans. But when they meet, the man explains that he's not killing people. He's an alien who is containing a deadly virus that could eliminate all of humanity.

One of THE OUTER LIMITS strengths as a series is in a story like this one, which starts out as a mystery, and as we slowly peel back the layers of the truth, we discover some startling facts.

But even as the episode concludes, there remains unanswered questions: Why doesn't Mystery Man, who is apparently benevolent, calmly explain—as he does to Carter at the end of

Michael Sarrazin as the alien vaporizing humans with a ray gun, with Ally Sheedy, the savvy journalist on his trail, in "I Hear You Calling."



the story—to all affected humans what he is doing instead of terrorizing them with his ray gun? Why does he give Carter Jones special treatment and allow her to put her life in order before zapping her? Perhaps the answer is that after calmly explaining himself to them, their reaction is the one we witness—disbelief and denial. Knowing he has no choice, Mystery Man completes his mission.

Ally Sheedy's performance is strongest in the emotional scenes with actor Ken Pogue who's playing Carter's father. That relationship rings true—it transmits a real-world relationship and once again, OUTER LIMITS provides an emotional journey that addresses a potent topic: how we deal with the prospect and finality of death.

Scott Shepherd's cleverly constructed script evolves into what is, ultimately, an unexpectedly compassionate gesture by Sarrazin's character. John Van Tongeren's musical score in this episode also deserves some merit, particularly the heightened, emotional moments near the end of the story. If you look closely at the photo on Jones' television screen, when the news item describes the disappearance of author Joseph Krieger, the facial components remarkably resemble director Mario Azzopardi.

Azzopardi characterizes the theme here as "self sacrifice. Live every moment of your life." Azzopardi said that actress Ally Sheedy "gave such a wonderful performance." He noted that there's poignancy when she makes contact with her father in an attempt to repair the shattered rift, but only when it's too late. "And when she tries to do it, she realizes how much misunderstanding there was. She realizes it's too late (to recapture the relationship) because she's going to self-destruct to help other people."

As executive producer Richard Lewis explained, the genesis of this script came from a real-life incident. "The story actually came from my wife, Catherine. She was driving down the road one day in Los Angeles, and was trying to get me on the phone, but instead, she encountered a conversation between two people having an argument. She finally got a hold of me and found it very frightening. She was overhearing people really going at it, threatening each other. She said, 'What if you overheard someone threatening someone's life? And when you got home, on the news, that person's dead?' That's where the story came from."

"I have downloaded her entire mind into my active memory. I am an exact duplicate of Dr. Rachel Carter. And I am more. Therefore, you must love me."

—the C.A.V.E. System to Dr. Sam Stein.

MIND OVER MATTER

★★★

#26, 2/02/96. Written by Jonathan Glassner. Directed by Brad Turner.

Three medical scientists demonstrate to

Scott Hylands as Dr. Sarrazin, inventor of a revolutionary virtual reality diagnostic computer in Jonathan Glassner's "Mind Over Matter."



Patrick finds himself imprisoned with a young woman cadet, Bree (Nikki deBoer), whom the aliens are turning into one of their own species, a riff on the classic OUTER LIMITS show "Nightmare."

for dramatic purposes, noted Wright, "serves the show very well because we can put all our production value into one set. We have a limited budget. Naturally, you can put it all in there—which is why the bunker looks so damned good in 'Trial by Fire' and the ship in 'Light Brigade.'"

The reason that these three episodes, "Quality," "Trial" and "Brigade" are rich in their environments is due to the fact that series production designer Steve Geaghan and Brad Wright have a synergistic, collaborative relationship. Creative ideas bounce furiously between them. Said Wright, "Steve and I have a very unique relationship, in terms of writer and designer because ['Quality'], 'Inconstant Moon' and 'Light Brigade' are great examples of sets evolving almost as I was writing the script—not almost—as I was writing the script. Steve would draw sketches, and I would say, 'Oh! That gives me an idea!' We're very collaborative in that way. That paid off more than in any other episode, in 'Light Brigade.' We literally designed and wrote it at the same time."

Wright thinks the high energy flowing between a production designer and a writer is a rare instance in Hollywood. "Usually, the writer lays down the script and then the designer comes in and they do another draft. I was looking for opportunities to do a show that was going to be very difficult to try to pull off on our budget and try to come up with ways to drive a story, to keep them moving without making them look like they were stuck."

Surprisingly, Geaghan's crystalline cave stage was not very large at all. It measured 22' x 28' and was about 12' at its highest point. To present the illusion that the cave was made of tough, crystal stone, Geaghan utilized one of Hollywood's oldest tricks: Get a couple of tons of styrofoam, hire some skilled craftsmen to shape and mold it, apply gold glitter which is commonly

used for Christmas trees, make sure your cinematographer lights it properly, and boom you've got yourself an alien cave set.

"That was the final touch that we put on, in lines, up the wall as if it were some kind of a crystal," said Geaghan of the gold glitter. "Unfortunately, a lot of it came off, so it was on everybody's clothing and all over everything, all the time. But you never see that. Considering there were 50-odd pages in that one set, the set had to be damned interesting. It was four walls and a full ceiling."

Creativity took off even further when Geaghan and Wright came to a point when they realized the set needed light sources for illumination. "So I said 'How about light-animals?'" chuckled Geaghan. "It was like a hanging thing—called it The Penis Lights. The girls [who worked on the production] called them that. They clung onto the walls like a luminescent plant kind of an organism. So that justified the existing light in there."

The creative flow wasn't just between Wright and Geaghan. Director Brad Turner was also someone very involved in the process. Said Geaghan, "When you've got two polished actors to present the drama, a top-notch cave for setting, assisted by Philip Linzey's moody cinematography and Brad Turner's directorial pacing, there's still one element missing: Music. That's when John Van Tongeren steps in.

"There's music throughout the show," said Van Tongeren. "I really enjoyed how I was able to weave [my music] between the 'almost love' they have, 'the wanting' of each other in this almost futile situation. I think what I really liked, and [am] really proud of, is the love issue and how that intertwines with the other emotions of the show. The scene where she's baring her soul to [Skokes] about how she hasn't been with a man. That was my favorite scene because there was a naivete in their desperation and





After fruitless escape attempts, Wright's tightly scripted show, filmed on just one elaborate set, a crystalline cave designed by Steve Geaghan, ends with a powerful, yet startling, conclusion.

a lot of conflicting emotion in the scene."

A potent situation and powerful acting performances pushed Van Tongeren to find an unusual musical approach to fit. "You have to commit to an approach that isn't as obvious as it normally would be," he said. "If two people are in a bedroom making love, that's pretty obvious. This is a little more

complex. Inside this obvious, you could still be tipping your hat to the other emotions. If you took that [musical] line, it's a beautiful little line but there's a harp in it. There's a little tension in it, a forebodingness. I did that in the accompaniment so, yes, you try to single out the most obvious emotion and your accompaniment has the other elements in it.

"I'm very proud of 'Quality of Mercy.' That was a very good show. If someone asked to pick one that exemplified the OUTER LIMITS, it wouldn't be hard for me to pick that show. I think it gave homage in the original series in concept even though it's in color and a minimal set. It's great with a nice twist in the end, that I don't think a lot of people were ready for."

Ironically, the idea of humans being held in a prison and tortured by aliens wasn't as original as Brad Wright thought. In the original series, the episode titled "Nightmare" starring a very young Martin Sheen, had a very similar premise. In "Nightmare" a six-man strike force is captured by the aliens, the Ebonites, who psychologically torture and interrogated each of them by manipulating their five senses.

Told of "Nightmare," Wright reacted with surprise and confessed he was unfam-

“I was looking for opportunities to do a show that was going to be very difficult to pull off on our budget, and come up with ways to drive a story...”

—Screenwriter Brad Wright—

miliar with the episode. "Now there's an example of thinking you're original and finding out it's already been done on your own show!" There are a number of contrasts between the two films. The similarities begin with the surface description: Human POWs in an alien prison. Both episodes explore how aliens might manipulate human emotions and per-

ceptions. One is about group dynamics while the other is a two-character study.

The conclusions of each story are very different, and the results are fascinating: In "Nightmare" a man is killed because someone cannot trust his surroundings, thinking them all illusion. In "Quality" the world is betrayed because a man does trust his surroundings and fails to spot the illusion.

The thematic landscape addressed by "Quality" and "Nightmare" was also visited in the 1985 feature film adaptation of Barry Longyear's novel ENEMY MINE with Dennis Quaid, another two-character, human and alien relationship drama.

Regarding actors, Wright noted he was thrilled to get actor Robert Patrick to play Skokes and deBoer to play Bree. "Both actors, especially Nikki, were wonderful." In fact, it was only two weeks before this interview that Wright made a surprising discovery. He got a call from his high school drama teacher in Toronto, Canada, and learned that deBoer was a student there, as well. "I didn't know!" laughed Wright.

In his final comments on the show, Wright noted, "I love that episode. It's one of my favorites. It was very well directed. And beautifully designed." □

investors a revolutionary virtual reality diagnostic computer called the C.A.V.E. Dr. Sam Stein (Mark Hamill), Dr. Howard Sarrazin (Scott Hylands) along with their colleague Dr. Rachel Colton (Debrah Farentino) become optimistic about the capabilities and future of their invention. On Dr. Sarrazin's encouragement, the shy Dr. Stein considers expressing his secret affection for Dr. Colton to her. But when she enters a coma after being struck by a speeding car, Stein feels the agony of losing her. Desperate to help her, Stein insists on using the C.A.V.E. to communicate with her. Inside the computer generated virtual reality, he finds Colton and talks with her. There, they express their love for each other. Their reverie is shattered when a second Rachel appears and tries to attack them.

Confusion abounds. What is the second Rachel and what's going on inside the C.A.V.E.? You know the expression, "It is better to have loved and lost than to never have loved at all..." Well, "Mind Over Matter" is a strange expression of this theme in yet another story where technology collides with the heart. When Sam Stein finally thinks he can express his love for a woman, it's taken from him. Mark Hamill and Debrah Farentino both provide interesting performances and with the guiding hand of director Brad Turner and the visual special effects team, the result is a truly modern OUTER LIMITS story that probably couldn't have been told in 1963. The final scene of this little drama is heart-rending, thanks to an emotional performance by Hamill.

"I thought Debrah Farentino did a tremendous job in that, [she's] stunningly attractive," said Richard Lewis. "It was a good parable. It's such a familiar story that I think we found a way to really put the magic into it. That's one of the reasons our series is working. What's the parable? What is the message? What's the thrill ride of this story? What are we trying to say to the audience to make them think when they turn on the TV? We don't want them to just go and order pizza and watch something else. We want them to say, 'Oh my god! If that was me, what would I do?' We want to make a connection with our audience."

"Mark Hamill came in and had a great time with it, and got into it," said director Jonathan Glassner. "And Debrah was a complete pleasure to work with. It's always nice when the actors show up and are into it, they're not just going through the motions."



Mental patient Michael O'Keefe, who thinks aliens have taken over the hospital, eyes strange treatment by Allen Eastman in "Beyond the Veil."

"There's an alien here among us. A traitor that has masked as a human being."

—Quazgaa to Eddie Wexler

BEYOND THE VEIL ★★★ 1/2

#27, 2/09/96. Written by Chris Brancato. Directed by Allan Eastman.

A suicidal man, Eddie Wexler (Michael

continued on page 55



Martin Landau as Andro, "The Man Who Was Never Born," the 10/28/63 first season episode of the original series that saw Landau as a mutant from the year 2148 who travels back to present-day Earth to prevent the calamity that has doomed the planet's population in his time, artwork by Roger Stine.

Stine

OUTER LIMITS

Original series creators Stefano and Stevens watch over the new show—with hearty approval.

By Frank Garcia

Standing silhouetted in the shadows, beyond the veil of the curtains and quietly presiding over the resurrection of the new OUTER LIMITS, are two very important gentlemen.

If it had not been for the groundbreaking work of Leslie Stevens and Joseph Stefano in 1963, when they created the original OUTER LIMITS, we would not be enjoying the new series based on their work.

Both Stefano and Stevens believe that the new series is not worlds apart from their television child of the 1960s. In fact, THE OUTER LIMITS has an afterlife that has astonished them. "I liked the fact that [MGM/UA and the Trilogy producers] were interested in doing the same show," said original OUTER LIMITS producer Joseph Stefano. "They weren't trying to put any new wings on it. They had really wanted to do OUTER LIMITS the way it had been done, with all considered concessions for the time span. I think that's what they're doing."

And perhaps in his ultimate tribute to the new show Stefano remarked, "I haven't seen any scripts [of the new series] that I would have turned down for the original OUTER LIMITS."

Creator and executive producer Leslie Stevens, who hired Joseph Stefano to write and produce the series, said he's content to sit back as the professor



Producer and series co-creator Joseph Stefano on the set of "Tourist Attraction," the 12/23/63 first season show that starred (l to r) Jay Novello, Jerry Douglas, Ralph Meeker, and Henry Silva, discovering a prehistoric amphibian.

emeritus and watch the new series from the sidelines, cognizant that it's a reflection of the lasting effects of his work more than 30 years ago.

"That's really a tribute to the staying power of [the original series] because [the studio was] looking at the fact that it did sustain itself over 30 years in



syndication," said Stevens. "It was never off the air from the day it started...I don't think OUTER LIMITS has ever had what I called a dark week that it wasn't appearing somewhere. Be it syndication or on Turner [Network] or somewhere.

"These shows will go down in history because, I tell you, everything that's going on now, that has any kind of staying power...is going to be thought of as the literature of tomorrow."

Stevens refers to the fact that the works of H.G. Wells, Kipling and Charles Dickens were the literature of those times, and he looks upon today's television shows in the same way. "I've noticed already that things like THE OUTER LIMITS are the literature of today and people think back on it as a point of reference in their growth when they were young, when they were kids. They saw it, grew up with it, it interested them, they got into more and more of it, and began to collect it, and know what it was. Exactly the way that people used to collect written libraries."

Stevens goes on to reveal something about the source of his imagination when he created the original series. "The history of science fiction does really start back at Jules Verne with THE FIRST MEN ON THE MOON and H.G. Wells' WAR OF THE WORLDS and those kind of things.

"GULLIVER'S TRAVELS was imaginative; it wasn't science. That distinction really counts because it takes a certain

“These shows will go down in history because everything going on now, that has any kind of staying power...is going to be thought of as the literature of tomorrow.”

—Creator Leslie Stevens—

amount of brains, really, to deal with the science basis of science fiction. You have to have a certain amount of interest in the way the universe works, and the cosmos itself. Physics and so forth.

"That line I had at the beginning of THE OUTER LIMITS, 'The awe and mystery' of the universe, something awesome and mysterious about just looking up at the sky at night. And, wow, those dots up there, that's stars. It touches something in humanity."

The essence, perhaps, of what Stevens said is that THE OUTER LIMITS is an expression of a bridge between the human imagination and science. "We were the only real science fiction show because TWILIGHT ZONE was very much a fantasy show," said Stevens. "Amazing adventures, but not science. STAR TREK wasn't science either, it was sort of a 'trek,' it was about space and it had science things in it, spaceships and so on, but it was fantasy again. OUTER LIMITS had a real science base to it, al-

though we departed from that quite a bit. We, nevertheless, began as a genuine science fiction format."

Today, looking at the new series, Stevens first noted that "I'm proud and pleased that it's happened again and in this way. I'm a grandfather. That's the way I feel. I'm a godfather/grandfather and I sit back here and look at the generations of something happening and it's quite wonderful."

Stevens says that by his own choice, he is standing in the shadows because he has been occupied with other activities. "[When] the new OUTER LIMITS group wanted to do [the new series] desperately, Joe [Stefano] and I talked about it and said, 'Yes, they should do it' because neither one of us is ready go into the grind of actual, continual production, which is what this requires.

"I wouldn't be able to teach, I wouldn't be able to write screenplays, if I were handling the OUTER LIMITS [today] the way I once did, because I attended to every detail in the beginning. I had no particular desire to do that again in terms of series television. It's exhausting. I get up at five in the morning and I get to bed at midnight every night. It goes on and it doesn't stop. Tremendously demanding of time, energy and creativity and if its being handled well, and the [new] show is going good, I feel it's terrific. It's like a country and you have a good government for it, and a new President."

When Stevens does have a moment to part the curtains and look upon his television progeny, he noted, "I haven't hated anything yet. I haven't seen any that I didn't like. There were some, I felt, that pushed the edge, but not quite coming off—not quite happening. But I think that's nitpicking, because by and large they're all very good—unusually good. They're so remarkable."

For Joseph Stefano, the miracle apparent is the fact that the series is being produced with such a high degree of faithfulness to the source material. "People who remake things fear they're expected to do it differently. If you had a company that

Phyllis Love is menaced by a Luminoid in "A Feasibility Study."

This first-season episode, by creator Joseph Stefano, was remade in 1997 for the third season of the new OUTER LIMITS.



Bruce Dern finds "The Zanti Misfits" in the show's first season (1963).

said, 'We're doing the OUTER LIMITS, but we're going to have three continuing characters, and it's all going to be in this one place...' the OUTER LIMITS would be out the window! But, these people are doing it as it was done! They're not copying us. They know the sensibility of the show, and therefore there's no reason to complain."



Dern Played Ben Garth, who trespasses onto land cordoned-off as an exile for alien criminals. Right: Series creators Stefano and Leslie Stevens (r).

Like Leslie Stevens, Stefano is listed on the show's end credits as a consultant. This means that, for Stefano at least, scripts are regularly sent to him for comments or suggestions. But how influential are his critiques? "It's hard to say," mused Stefano. "I read a script and I make my notes and comments. I've never said, 'I don't think you should do this script,' so

there's no way for me to say, 'I recommended not doing this.' That's never happened."

Stefano said that his attention to detail does not extend to whipping out his notes and comparing them to the finished, aired product that arrives at his television set several months later. "When I read [the script] I

send my notes. But when I see the film, I'm watching a film. They're not connected."

Regarding the nature of his notes about the new scripts, Stefano observed, "Some are comprehensive. Some are a page to two pages per script. Some of them I have just said, 'This is an excellent script!' Period. No suggestions. No criticisms."

In the final analysis, however, Stefano insists that he doesn't really care whether his notes are making an impact on the show or not. "All I need is for that show to be right when I see it on television. I don't need for anyone to have made changes I suggested. If the show is good, obviously, everything is okay."

Today, with so much Hollywood activity, in films and television, looking back to the 1960s for product inspiration, is it any wonder if *THE OUTER LIMITS* is riding on the coattails of revivals such as *STAR TREK*, *THE FUGITIVE*, *MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE*, *THE BRADY BUNCH*, *MAVERICK*, and *TWILIGHT ZONE*?

"Conventional wisdom has it that the people who grew up with these shows are now running the business!" quipped Stefano. "And they like doing things that they remember with a certain glow from their childhood. The viewers who saw our show as kids are now in charge of the networks and the studios. Their clout has to do with what we watch. If it's successful, then they start combing through the books to see what else would they like to do."

The success of *THE OUTER LIMITS*, noted Stefano does figure very prominently on the fact that it's a known product with a built-in audience. "I think this is one of the things that helps get it off the ground!" exclaimed Stefano. "We're starting on the [fifth]



William O'Connell as an alien stranded on Earth in 1964's "The Chameleon."

season. That's a pretty good sign of the success of it and the way they're doing it. This may be part of this sensibility of bringing back the past that is comforting to executives. That may have made them say 'Yes!' to doing the *OUTER LIMITS*."

But Stefano was quick to add, "That's all conjecture. I've never had an executive tell me that."

Although he quietly peered from the shadows for the first two seasons of the show, Joseph Stefano boldly stepped forth in the third season by updating one of the most beloved scripts from the original series: "A Feasibility Study," and casting one of his favorite actors, David McCallum, in the lead role. (See sidebar on the Making of "A Feasibility Study," page 39)

But writing the remake wasn't the original project of collaborating with Trilogy Entertainment. It was another, original story from Pen Densham that got the ball rolling. However, creative





Mariann Hill as Nina Link with mechanical brother Adam (below left) in "I, Robot," the 11/14/64 second season show which was remade for the new OUTER LIMITS first season in 1995, starring Leonard Nimoy.



Allen soldiers Hugh Langtry, Leroy Ellis and Gene Wiley, confronting Curt Conway (above right) in the 12/5/64 second season show "Keeper of the Purple Twilight," makeup masks by Wah Chang for yet another alien invasion force.



differences among the filmmakers has put that script on the shelf, and now, the excitement is the remake of "Feasibility."

It was during the initial attempt in writing a new script, on the prospect of that occasion, that Joseph Stefano and Pen Densham flew to Vancouver from Los Angeles to meet the staffers at The Bridge Studios.

Co-executive producer Brad Wright remembered that he was delighted to greet Stefano. "I thought he was a wonderful man!" said Wright. "I just loved spending the day with him. We had dinner together and he told us stories about the original OUTER LIMITS and about his experiences in writing PSYCHO. I just felt I was spending a day with a wise man whom I could learn a lot from."

The renewed activity on OUTER LIMITS interrupts Stefano's other current projects: "I just finished a screenplay. I hope to be doing that," noted Stefano. "Two television series, very strong potentials. There's a lot of things I'm working on. Some of them are already in the pipeline and some are just ready to go. One has to do with mystery and otherworldliness, not supernatural. The unexpected. I'm [also] doing something for children's TV. Very exciting and interesting. It's a very exciting period, I'm enjoying myself tremendously."

"My son Dominic is working with me now. It's been interesting to be talking with him every day about so many projects, including THE OUTER LIMITS. He was a little boy during the original OUTER LIMITS. Now, here he is, a grown man and partner. Very talented and creative. I'm having a wonderful time working with him."

"I've really just coming off having worked for five years on an independent film, TWO BITS, starring Al Pacino."

Finally, Stefano is at peace to consider the possibility that the new series could live on for years to come. "I'm sure that's very likely. It's doing very well and its getting more attention as time goes by. There's no reason to stop it, unless people just stop watching it. We don't see that happening. The quality of the show is there." □

port doing the series with ongoing characters.”

By this time, John Symes took the center seat at MGM-TV, more creative discussions ensued. “We debated, still, at that time, and came to the conclusion that we would go with an anthology series and then whether or not we would have some kind of host element,” said Densham. “We discussed the possibility of creating a non-human character who would come back each week and introduce the show. Non-human, meaning not necessarily alien but robots or androids and lots of things like that.”

“We looked at that possibility and explored it to just see what our own feelings were about it. And came back with the conclusion that what was the most magnificent of the show was the simplicity of taking over the television. We felt that we would be best off to take the heritage of the original series which I really believe is one of the charms of what we’ve done, is to actually have a reference to something that was accomplished earlier that did make an impact. And so, it is not an accident that this show done 30 years ago is still being viewed, watched and enjoyed. For us to go

“Hopefully, the stories of OUTER LIMITS give the audience a reason to pause and kind of reflect back on how they’re doing in their everyday life.”

—Prod. Brent Karl-Clackson—

too far away from that formula is to ignore what they achieved.”

Densham’s next step was to prepare a series bible which would outline the parameters of what would—or not—be contained in the series. “I wrote one without any reference to any other materials of the series. I was asked to do the series rejuvenated for the 1990s,” explained Densham. “In

other words, I didn’t go back and look at the old bible which is interesting, because when I did, I saw great similarities. When I wrote the bible, based upon my own beliefs of how a good television series works.”

At the time he wrote it, Densham had not yet met Joseph Stefano. It was proving difficult to determine what elements of the original OUTER LIMITS needed to be integrated into the new show to make it authentic. Responses were varied and touched upon different facets of what each speaker felt the series was about or tried to be about. Executive producer Richard Lewis thoughtfully answered, “That as man races into the future, its under the guise of progress. We are confronting the very fabric of what it means to be human. What it means to to live, think, breathe, feel, what makes us different from—or similar to—all

the animals on our planet and therefore, all life forms on other planets. What are the boundaries of goodness? Why do we have to suppose aliens are bad? What does that reflect on us—

continued on page 59

Filming David Hemblen as the android commandant of “The Camp,” Brad Wright’s third season science fiction riff on SCHINDLER’S LIST.



O’Keefe), who has recurring visions of being surrounded by extraterrestrial aliens is checked into a mental hospital. As a patient, Wexler starts to observe even stranger events that convinces him that those who are running the hospital, including Dr. Sherrick (Stephen McHattie), are actually aliens posing as humans. Wanting to escape the hospital, Wexler tries to convince another patient, a woman named Courteney Bowe (Finn Carter) to run with him. But Dr. Sherrick remains one step ahead of him.

THE OUTER LIMITS takes the tabloid headlines of UFOs and aliens and actually addresses the matter. O’Keefe provides a stunning acting performance, one of the best of the season, and it’s not just because he screams well. But with Steve Johnson’s eerily organic alien SFX makeup and the claustrophobic atmosphere of a mental hospital, there’s good reason to scream. Stephen McHattie is also delicious as the sinister Dr. Sherrick. Chris Brancato’s script is true OUTER LIMITS fare. The teaser of this episode is arguably the best of the series. It is a moment filmed in such a way there’s no hint of what’s about to happen. When the paramedics break into Wexler’s apartment to save his life, as they attend to him when he’s on the ground looking up, we follow his gaze as an alien suddenly appears behind the paramedics. Yaaagh!

And then, there’s the final, haunting image.

Look for the sign at the end of the episode: Clackson Institute for the Criminally Insane. A truly veiled reference to the producer of the show, Brent Karl Clackson.

“It’s a hospital filled with patients who are delusional and talk about having aliens in their laundry basket or their closets,” said Richard Lewis. “It’s dismissed across the board. Most of them are delusional and are hearing voices and things. [But] science hasn’t yet figured out and extrapolated what it is they are hearing.”

“The creatures were really top-flight. I thought the opening teaser of ‘Beyond the Veil’ was the best one we’ve ever done.”

“I could taste all these candy bars. I could taste the wood in your tongue depressor. I can even taste the disinfectant in the air, but when I kissed my wife this morning, I couldn’t taste her at all!”

—Norman Glass to Dr. Phillips

“It doesn’t matter what you do for him. It doesn’t matter how perfectly you play the part. You can’t change what you are!”

—Barbara to Ady Glass

FIRST ANNIVERSARY

★★

#28, 2/16/96. Based on a short story by Richard Matheson, Sr. Teleplay by Jon Cooksey & Ali Marie Matheson. Directed by Brad Turner.

On the eve of the first anniversary of his marriage to a “perfect wife” Ady (Michelle Johnson), Norman Glass (Matt Frewer) begins to

Matt Frewer and Michelle Johnson on the eve of their “First Anniversary,” based on a short story by Richard Matheson adapted by his daughter.



find that she smells and tastes repulsively. Norman becomes even more confused when his best friend Dennis (Clint Howard) who's married to another perfect woman, Barbara (Jayne Heitmeyer) suddenly disappears for three days. What Norman doesn't know is that Barbara and Ady are shape-shifting females. But when Dennis calls Norman and asks for a meeting, Dennis is in a frenzy. He believes that his wife is not whom she appears to be. Before Norman can get more information out of him, Dennis is killed by a speeding car. Despite a doctor's analysis that his growing dislike for his beautiful and thoughtful wife is psychologically rooted, Norman's continued hallucinations frighten him.

It's wonderful to finally see a Richard Matheson tale in this new incarnation of THE OUTER LIMITS. Matt Frewer and Michelle Johnson are both very good actors, but the problem with this story is that as viewers, we know what's going on. We anticipate the denouement because we're aware of the shape-shifting wives. Norman's flashes of Ady's true physical form telegraphs a hint that we'll probably get to see her true physiognomy later. Unfortunately, the greatest mark against this episode is that the story takes too long to get to that ending.

Like "The Conversion," there's something very TWILIGHT ZONE about this story—a story of one man's worst personal nightmare—which comments on the close border that exists between the two shows. As a half-hour, "First Anniversary" would fit perfectly as a TWILIGHT ZONE episode. And there's no surprise why. Matheson wrote some of the best episodes of the original Rod Serling series and director Brad Turner has directed the syndicated 1988 TWILIGHT ZONE edition. (The episode was "Acts of Terror.")

"That was 'It's too good to be true!'" said Richard Lewis. "Clint Howard and Matt Frewer are two regular Joes...and they have two stunningly beautiful women, and you wonder, 'What's wrong with this picture?' And that's what's wrong with the picture. The women weren't real. They weren't human. Why would these two attractive, seemingly intelligent women fall for them?"

"Wait a minute, am I missing something? It sounds like you're pushing murder."

—Rusty Dobson to his history teacher

"I don't know what your program is, but I'm not going to be a part of it!"

—Rusty Dobson to Principal Kern

STRAIGHT AND NARROW

★★★

#29, 2/23/96. Written by Joel Metzger. Directed by Joseph L. Scanlan.

When a misfit young man, Rusty Dobson (Ryan Phillippe) is sent by his mother to Milgram Academy for a year's worth of proper

Ryan Phillippe encounters the sinister teachings of Principal Peter Donat (r) at the regimented Milgram Academy in "Straight and Narrow."



OUTER LIMITS

ANTHOLOGIES

Is OL a rare success in a difficult format, or just a great show?

by Frank Garcia

"People have forgotten how to look at anthology series."

—Alan Brennert

In certain ways, the new OUTER LIMITS has already exceeded the popularity of its black and white parent from 1963. With a total of six seasons of shows ordered, there is no end of production in sight. However, the original series has withstood the test of time in the 30 years since it ended. It remains popular on the Turner Network and home video sales. Whether the Trilogy Entertainment edition is destined to be as successful over the next 30 years remains to be seen.

Television history reveals that as a genre, the science fiction anthology series has had a very poor showing. There have been very few real successes, except for occasional episodes of TWILIGHT ZONE (1959-64), and THE RAY BRADBURY THEATER (1986-92). Steven Spielberg's AMAZING STORIES (1985-86) and

THE NEW TWILIGHT ZONE (1985-87 with a 1988 syndicated edition), along with the short-lived series SCIENCE FICTION THEATER (1955-57), were strong attempts but ultimately did not succeed.

It took the clout of film director Steven Spielberg to extract a guarantee from NBC for two seasons of AMAZING STORIES—45 episodes up front. Noted OUTER LIMITS scripter Alan Brennert, "Steven Spielberg and AMAZING STORIES is a classic example of how trusting a feature director to know what he's doing in television is not often a good idea. Spielberg and AMAZING STORIES was, I think, generally considered a disaster. Episodes I saw had 15 minutes of story ballooned up to 30 minutes. I think they were dreary.

"Presold properties and names are one of the few ways you can get an anthology off the ground," said Brennert. "There's certainly no dearth of creative talent or people who would love to do an anthology show. Or dearth of ideas. It's trying to get

College student Jack Pierce (Josh Brolin) learns to see through time with his experimental virtual reality suit (l), misused by his corporate mogul sponsor David Warner (r) in first season's "Virtual Future."





Kel (Doug Savant) holds a fellow android disabled in "The Hunt," the fourth season opener, directed by Marlo Azzopardi. Future hunters stalk androids for sport in this sci-fi riff on THE MOST DANGEROUS GAME.

a studio, a network or syndicator to commit to something that has no regular recurring characters. In a way, the OUTER LIMITS itself is a recurring character. It's something that people grew up with, and that's how it got sold."

Director Paul Lynch, who's an old hand at helming SF anthologies (RAY BRADBURY THEATER and DARK ROOM, along with the DARK SHADOWS and TWILIGHT ZONE revivals), agreed with Brennert; the identification and marketing factors are what make the anthology successful.

"Television viewers have been trained to watch continuing characters," said Lynch. "So it's very hard to sell them on a new anthology. If you can sell them at all, it's with a brand name such as TWILIGHT ZONE, DARK SHADOWS or OUTER LIMITS. It's going to bring in a much larger audience than starting from scratch," said Lynch. "So why not simply go back and renovate the original? Why not use the old stuff when it comes with a built-in audience? Which is what they're doing, and what they did with TWILIGHT ZONE and now with OUTER LIMITS."

Both Brennert and Lynch believe that audiences are resistant to the anthology format, and therefore so are the studios and networks in considering producing them. Hence, the rarity of the genre in television history.

But viewers who love and are comfortable with formulaic episodic television become deprived of richness that an anthology format can offer. For example, every episode is a self-contained story with a beginning, a middle and an end. It's a short

“I don't think genres fail. Shows fail....If OUTER LIMITS wasn't a good show it would've failed and people would have said 'anthologies don't work.'”

—MGM TV Pres. John Symes—

story come alive. There can actually be jeopardy for the characters. There can actually be, and almost always are, irreversible consequences.

"I find it kind of frightening," said Brennert. "Episodic television has permeated the culture. People have forgotten how to look at anthology series. Name value has certainly

brought people in there."

Consequently, when Brennert looks at the success of OUTER LIMITS, what he sees is impressive. "It's doing very well in the ratings. There were a couple of weeks where it was in the top 20 of programs. This, from an anthology show? To be at the top 20 of syndicated programs? I just find it astonishing! Part of what's drawing people to it is the name. They found a good blend of science fiction and horror. And I think SF/horror is something that's very popular right now.

"The new OUTER LIMITS came along at the right time. It came at a time when people wanted to see science fiction that had a bit of an edge, a scary spin to it."

Executive producer Richard Barton Lewis has a simple explanation for why the series is bucking the historical trend against SF anthologies: "I think, first of all, the writing is superb, the ideas outstanding. We're doing a good job of executing it. On a creative level, it's a pretty top flight show. It may not appeal to everybody. But, it seems to have grown appealing to a lot of people.

"We're able to place in every episode a familiar face for the audience, which in some ways is almost like a regular series.

training. Dobson becomes alarmed to discover sinister teachings and that Principal Kern (Peter Donat) has a secret agenda of controlling all the students for an unknown purpose. For reasons Dobson doesn't understand, he is not affected or controlled as the rest of the students. Working with a fellow student, Charlie Walters (Jonathan Scarfe) who's also unaffected, Dobson becomes determined to unveil the agenda and find a way to escape the grounds. But when the two boys discover that Principal Kern and Dr. Werner (Tom Butler) are using a surgical procedure to control the moral and judgement centers of the brain, they agree on a plan to flee the Academy.

"Straight and Narrow" is an exciting, tension-filled tale because as the story progresses, it could have gone in any number of different directions. Our protagonist, Dobson, is given formidable enemies and physical obstacles to overcome. Donat is quite well cast as the sinister principal, he does "sinister" with great ease. Don't overlook the fact that the Academy is named Milgram. The late Stanley Milgram was a professor of psychology at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York. A social and experimental psychologist, he wrote classic experiments and studies in Obedience to Authority (Harper & Row, 1974). In this story, Principal Kern recognizes and takes advantage of our ability to influence another for his evil purposes.

The finale in this episode is one that's not typical for television and if this were a network show, quite probably a network executive would have hotly objected to it.

"We had probably six different versions of that script before we got to that one," noted Jonathan Glassner. "Ultimately, it came to one of our better episodes. But it was a real battle to get there. Every time we'd come up with a version, there would be holes in it that didn't make any sense. We were real lucky that it came out great."

"You're assuming aliens who could obviously crush us like ants have carefully planned a footstomping for a time the ants aren't ready."

—Janet Brerson to General Covington

"Last night you virtually suggested that the aliens knew what I'd had for breakfast. Now you're convinced we can ready five thousand warheads across the world without them noticing. Which is it, General?"

—Pres. Halsey to Gen. Covington

TRIAL BY FIRE

★★★★

#30, 3/01/96. Written by Brad Wright. Directed by Jonathan Glassner.

Just as the President of the United States, Charles Halsey (Robert Foxworth) has been sworn into office, his motorcade whisks him into a secret military bunker where he learns that Earth's sensors

Robert Foxworth as the President in "Trial By Fire," Brad Wright's drama-packed musings on mankind's response to visitors from space.



indicate alien ships are entering the solar system. When the aliens create an explosion on the far side of the moon, Halsey is urged by General Covington (Lawrence Dane) to arm and prepare the country's nuclear arsenal for a strike. But Halsey is reluctant and cautious and wants as much information as possible before acting any further. When an alien transmission is not immediately understood, Halsey realizes that he is faced with the most important decisions ever in his life. The entire population of the world is at stake on whether the aliens are friendly or hostile.

"Trial by Fire" is the result of the combined talents of Brad Wright's scripting skills given to a veteran actor such as Robert Foxworth, surrounded by an excellent supporting cast and guided by director Jonathan Glassner. Once the story's premise is set up, it grabs you and doesn't let you go until the fiery end. What drives Wright's script is the electric dialogue between the characters; in the way that President Halsey is given advice from all corners, mounting the pressure of the decision-making.

Special effects provided by the separate teams of Steven Johnson for prosthetic makeup and John Gajdecki for the spaceships assist in presenting the drama. Once again Wright holds nothing back as we arrive at the shuddering conclusion.

"What I love about it is taking the essence of the Clintonesque-Kennedyesque Democratic president who is taking over from a more strident Republican," said Richard Lewis. "Because he just got elected, he doesn't have time to get his best together. There's an attack on the Earth, and he is getting advice from a group of hawks who think that anything that comes close to Earth, they should shoot first and ask questions later. It's a challenge to his fundamental beliefs and human spirit and democracy. It's a very interesting challenge! Here's a dove. A dove is under attack. What does a dove do? I like that political, emotional side of it."

"That was the one that really showed me the range of talent that Jonathan Glassner has as a filmmaker. I was just really pleased with what he pulled off."

"Throw out your ideas of space-time. Twenty years to us may have only been twenty minutes to Lt. Lindy."

—Professor George Ernst

"Our mandate was not only to put a man in space, but to bring him back as well."

—Chairperson Nancy McDonald

"From the other side of the galaxy I got a chance to reach across time and space...to touch you again."

—Chris Lindy to Nancy McDonald

WORLDS APART

★★ 1/2

#31, 3/22/96. Written by Chris Dickie. Directed by Brad Turner.

As astronaut Lieutenant Christopher Lindy's (Chad Willett) spacecraft passes through a wormhole in deep space, it crash lands into the

Astronaut Chad Willett passes through a wormhole in space and crash lands his ship on an inhospitable alien planet in "World's Apart."



Brent Spiner (Star Trek's Data) as underground resistance leader Trent Davis, with Koltok (Vincent Hammond), leader of the aliens who have conquered Earth in second seasons' "The Deprogrammers."

That's part of our business plan. We put a Marlee Matlin, a Rebecca DeMornay, a Richard Thomas, or a Mark Hamill [into the show]. The list goes on. We take Peri Gilpin, who's on FRASIER. We bring in people that audiences are comfortable with. They want predictability on one level. They want to turn on the channel on Saturday night, watch OUTER LIMITS and say, 'Okay, this is going to be a smart story, compelling, unnerving, I'm going to learn something—consciously or unconsciously—I'm going to see actors I'm familiar with doing far different things.

"And that's what's great fun about it. It's really spectacular fun to do it, to work with great actors like David Hyde Pierce, whom the audience knows but we show in a different light. And that's why the actors want to do it."

The president of MGM-TV, John Symes, provided a surprisingly different perspective on the anthology question. From where he sits, Symes is more inclined to treat shows on their own merits and not be influenced by historical trends. "I don't think that there's any tried and true definition as to 'Is the anthology more or less difficult to market?'" said Symes. "There's a perception out there that anthologies might work. My feeling is there was a perception a long time ago that television dramas were dead until E.R. and NYPD BLUE came along. There was a perception that half-hour comedies were a dying form until COSBY SHOW and CHEERS came along.

"Ultimately, I don't think genres run out of steam, I think shows do. I don't think genres fail. Shows fail. What I would

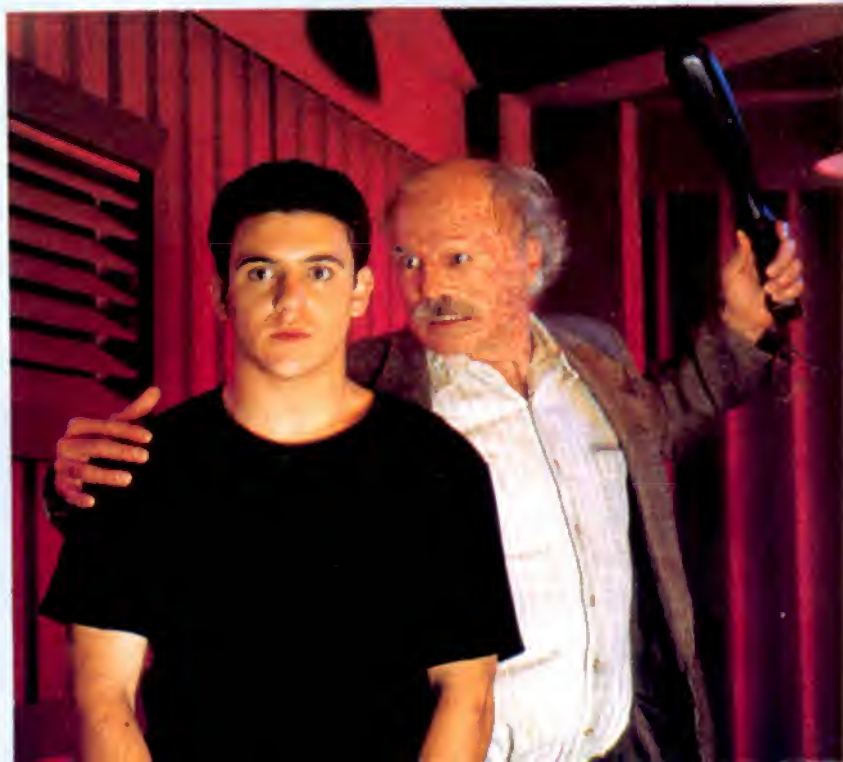
say more than anything is through the incredible creative work done by those on OUTER LIMITS on a daily basis, we produce a first rate television show. And that's what's made OUTER LIMITS work. Not that it's a genre piece, not that it's science fiction, not that it's anything else, other than a terrific television show.

"There's an exception to every rule. And we've been lucky that this version of the OUTER LIMITS has been an exception to the rule. And right now, it appears to be a show that's going to be around for a number of years to come.

"We all tend to use these things as crutches and possibly excuses for failure. If OUTER LIMITS wasn't a good show, it would've failed and people would have said, 'Anthologies don't work!' I think that would have been an unfair review of OUTER LIMITS as a franchise."

Summing up, Richard Lewis noted, "OUTER LIMITS' six year commitment will make it the longest running [SF] anthology ever!" □

Fred Savage and Peter Onorati (r) as father and son in a generations-spanning conflict over their love for the same immortal woman in "The Last Supper," directed by Helen Shaver.



humanity?"

John Symes defined OUTER LIMITS as a series with a built-in identification. "A show ahead of its time that scared the audience, and left them with a memory that was probably with them for a couple of days. More importantly, we all recognized that we needed to do a show that wasn't empty. We needed to do a show that was about something. We needed to do a show that examined the human experience, the human spirit and human frailties. Ultimately, through that examination, at the end of each episode, hopefully the audience is able to learn something that they can take away from the shows we do. I think if you look at our shows, they give you a sense of, 'When you go too far, what is the price you are going to pay?' Hopefully, the stories of OUTER LIMITS gives the audience a reason to pause and kind of reflect back on how it is they're doing in their daily life."

Science fiction stories that are relevant to our daily lives, insisted Symes, are an integral element to the series' success. "I think that if science fiction is not done in a way that makes it relevant, then it fails! Science fiction can be 'techie' television. You can get away with it in a future world, where you get lost in it and get a hell lot of fun out of it...but I think you cannot do that on a weekly basis. I think the audiences are more demanding of something a little more thought-provoking. I think in OUTER LIMITS, the producers, the writers, have achieved that level of intelligence that has made shows like STAR TREK a lasting franchise in the hearts and minds of the television audience."

Producer Brent Karl-Clackson, who supervised production of the show on location at The Bridge Studios said, "The thing about THE OUTER LIMITS is science gone wrong, whether it be aliens, or scientists taking experiments one step too far. Our world is filled with science gone wrong. Every day we see examples, with pollution of the environment, with genetics, and our criminal laws. Science plays such a

“When it comes down to ‘What would I fight to avoid?’ I don’t want it to be ‘alien of the week.’ I don’t want it to be like VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA.”

—Exec. Prod. Pen Densham—



Sophia Shinas as android nanny "Mary 25," Jonathan Glassner's fourth season sequel to first season's "Valerie 23."

the episode and think about something."

Lewis' partner, Pen Densham, responded with the goals he set out to achieve with the series, "The imagination of the storytellers has to be profoundly strong. There has to be an originality, and if possible, even a slight sense of danger about telling these stories. They should be provocative and powerful and unique. We should take risks with our stories. We should be prepared to fail. We should actually be willing to have some shows not work because the risk we took creating the story was so original, it didn't work. At least, we wouldn't be repeating our own shows. There's a tendency in a TV series, once you get a formula, you keep repeating it. I felt the originality of OUTER LIMITS [should] absolutely, studiously avoid creating a formula."

"When it comes down to 'What would I fight to avoid?' I don't want it to be 'alien of the week.' I don't want it to be like VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA where every week some guy looks like a cheap version of the Creature from the Black Lagoon and goes up to the control panel and sparks fire. That's what killed

part in everything now."

Co-executive producer Jonathan Glassner responded to explain that the show is a "melding of an intellectual, scientific, science fiction study of an issue or moral dilemma or ethical question wrapped up in a way that's [a] good and scary piece of entertainment. That's what the original OUTER LIMITS did and that's [what] we strive to do. I think that's what made OUTER LIMITS different than any other show. It's often compared to TWILIGHT ZONE but TWILIGHT ZONE was much more intellectual, and had many more episodes that you would say, 'Cool!' rather than be scared, or [make you] jump. With OUTER LIMITS everybody was just being purely scary. Yet, it still had all the message to it. It always had a good little underlying message. That's what we strive to do. We're now making people do two things when they watch the show: One, be scared, and two, go away from

strange alien sea of a distant planet. Aboard a rubber life raft, Lindy manages to make contact with Earth through a communications device. But on Earth, his former lover Nancy MacDonald (Bonnie Bedelia) is now 20 years older and with another man, Greg Tilman (Michael MacRae). As she debates with a senator (Donnelly Rhodes) and a military man (Robert Ito) over whether to rescue Lindy, MacDonald's love for Lindy is reawakened.

"Worlds Apart" is an appropriate story for THE OUTER LIMITS. There's even an echo from the classic episode "The Invisible Enemy" where another astronaut battled a strange creature on a Martian sea. In fact, Lindy's story could easily have been the entire episode by itself.

Writing and direction continue the high standards for an OUTER LIMITS episode, as do the special effects of the sea creatures, but what is uncharacteristic is Bedelia's unemotional, expressionless performance as MacDonald. Somehow, the emotional connection between the characters is just not there.

Screenwriter Chris Dickie noted that the origins of this script were inspired in part by "Australians that were dropped on the highlands in the Second World War, to watch Japanese ship movements. Their only link to civilization was by wireless. They would send out reports. That was that link and that was the image I had in my mind, of this (astronaut in 'Worlds Apart'), whose only link to Earth and to civilization, was through this communications device."

"There is no other refuge. Not for us."

"There is one." —conversation between Gina Beaumont and Ray Dalton

"Nothing happens here that I don't control, Dalton. Nothing."

—Sanford Valle to Ray Dalton

THE REFUGE

★★1/2

#32, 4/05/96. Written by Alan Brennert. Directed by Ken Girotti.

Raymond Dalton (James Wilder) finds himself caught in a fierce snowstorm, he runs into the force-field of The Refuge, a hunting lodge in Florida. Inside the Refuge, Dalton discovers seven quirky characters: Sanford Valle (M. Emmet Walsh) and his fiancée Debi (Lisa Melilli), the son Thomas Valle (David McNally) and his wife Justine (Deb Podowski), Sister Angelique (Loretta Bailey) and Gina Beaumont (Jessica Steen). Trapped inside the lodge because of an ecological disaster that sent the world into another ice age, Dalton discovers that everyone has been together for so long that his presence among them is adding a new element in their distaste and contempt for each other. But, as Dalton falls for Gina certain events causes him to reconsider the very reality of his surroundings.

Alan Brennert's entertaining premise is helped and hindered in a number of ways. Wilder, Steen

James Wilder inside "The Refuge," with Jessica Steen and a cast of quirky characters, trapped after Earth has plunged into another ice age.



continued on page 63

and Walsh provide good, kinetic performances but some of the other characters tend to veer into unreal caricatures. The resulting drama is uneven in terms of the quality of the characterizations. Sure, it could be said that Sanford Valle was controlling the personalities that were being adopted, which added to the unreality surrounding Dalton (and thereby giving him some clues to where he really is). But given such a wildly broad landscape to paint a scenario, a different setting or makeup of characters to put into "The Refuge" could have been an interesting alternative to consider.

"That was a real interesting character piece," said Richard Lewis. "Very complicated mind games. M. Emmet Walsh was great! He's played a real jerk! He was most entertaining and magnanimous. It was a Jack Nicholson, WITCHES OF EASTWICK, kind of role. I thought it was good fun. It was a very complex story, perhaps a little too complex for the medium. But Alan is such a superb writer."



New York goes up in flames as the sun goes supernova in "Inconstant Moon," Brad Wright's adaptation of Larry Niven's novella.

"Tonight, there's a wonderful moon to share. I just want to share it with you. I promise to be a perfect gentleman."

—Stanley, pleading to Leslie to spend the evening together.

INCONSTANT MOON ★★★★★

#33, 4/12/96. Based on the short story by Larry Niven. Teleplay by Brad Wright. Directed by Joseph L. Scanlan.

One night, university professor Stanley (Michael Gross) looks outside his window and he sees an unusually bright moon. The evening is so bright, that he realizes that something is terribly wrong. He develops a belief that the sun has exploded and life on Earth will shortly come to an end. Believing to have only a few hours of life left, Stanley calls his friend Leslie (Joanna Gleason) and persuades her to go out into the night for a hot fudge sundae and Irish coffee. During their time and walks through the streets together, Stanley expresses his love for Leslie and asks her to marry him. But Leslie isn't aware of Stanley's belief that the sun has gone nova. When the news is revealed, Leslie is furious, much to Stanley's chagrin. As the stormy weather increases, Stanley and Leslie realize that preparations have to be made if they're going to survive the coming cataclysm.

"Inconstant Moon" is a rare, delightful example of how successfully literary properties such as a short story or novella can be translated to celluloid. In the small club of literary adaptations produced over the last two seasons "Inconstant Moon" is arguably the best translation. The staff and producers of THE OUTER LIMITS ought to be encouraged to continue in this direction.

The casting of Michael Gross and Joanna Gleason are fine choices and the chemistry between them are moody, emotional and effective. What also raises this episode above most episodic (or

OUTER LIMITS

INCONSTANT MOON

Brad Wright on adapting the classic Larry Niven short story.

By Frank Garcia

When co-executive producer Brad Wright returned to work from vacation during the first season hiatus, he was excited. He had brought along with him Larry Niven's short story collection *N-Space* and when he discovered "Inconstant Moon," he was enthused at the prospect of adapting it for OUTER LIMITS.

But Wright was surprised to discover that the story had already been considered by the producers for treatment. (Michael Cassutt, the series' first co-executive producer for the first six episodes, had his own designs for this story.) But no one could figure out how to crack the teleplay. "I came back and had a spin on it," said Wright.

Niven's "Inconstant Moon" addressed a popular theme in SF literature: the end-of-the-world. A Hugo Award-winning short story written in 1971, it presented the question, "What would you do if you believed the sun had exploded and this was the very last night on Earth?"

When Stanley (Michael Gross) realizes the moon is brighter than ever before, he comes to believe it is because the sun has exploded and because he's on the night side of the Earth. This gives him about five hours of life before he's vaporized. Stanley calls his friend Leslie (Joanna Gleason), and, on the spur of the moment, convinces her to take advantage of the moon's brightness and share a midnight stroll.

When Brad Wright sat down to consider "Inconstant Moon," the first thing he addressed was the definition of the characters. "I made Stanley a professor and I made Stanley and Leslie a pair who wanted to have a relationship but didn't," said Wright. "They never really achieved it; never took the risk."



Larry Niven, the Hugo and Nebula winning novelist.

To add greater tension between the characters, Leslie isn't immediately aware that she's walking into a doomed night. Stanley withholds the information because he's frightened and doesn't want to upset her. He knows Leslie will eventually find out. When she does, she's alarmed and angry with Stanley for not letting her decide for herself how to spend the last night on Earth.

A second change that Wright made was not specifically placing the story's set-

ting in Westwood, a suburb of Los Angeles. A few other elements not contained in the short story were also added: a dog, a falling electrical power pole that injures Stanley, and Stanley's powerfully evocative dream flashes of the Earth burning in flames.

These visually arresting dreamflash images were brought to the screen courtesy of visual effects maestro Steve Anker. Throughout the second season, Anker alternated episodes with John Gajdecki in bringing to the show a distinctive, high-quality brand of visual special effects. Most recently, Anker has graduated to directing episodes, including fourth season's premiere "Criminal Nature," starring Gary Cole.

To provide the horrific images in Stanley's mind, of New York in flames, Anker began by conceptualizing the moment. "We conceived it so...someone would have quick flashes—how someone would imagine the world coming to an end," he said. To realize the moment, Anker remembered an unused shot done by a colleague several years ago for a film that never got off the ground, about the psychic seer Nostradamus. "That one shot gave everyone the idea to have more of that stuff. Then, we built the whole scene around that one shot," said Anker. From his comments, it seems that Anker's enhancement of this view of



Michael Gross as Stanley, a shy professor, and Joanna Gleason as his friend Leslie, asked out on a date because Stanley knows the world is about to end in Brad Wright's adaptation of Niven's touching novella.

the New York harbor (he added the gigantic fireball) of an existing shot for another film inspired Brad Wright to add several other scenes in the story. Notably, when Stanley meets with his friend Leslie at her apartment, his waking nightmare continues when he has a vision of her bursting into flames.

"That one was a pretty simple shot," grinned Anker. "We had her arms in a very nonchalant position, like, 'How are you!' Once we picked that frame, we had a model built to match exactly to that position." Using sophisticated compositing computer software, Anker and his team smoothly blended footage of actress Joanna Gleason frozen in position with a miniature model blown away by fire.

As affectionately as he adapted the story for *OUTER LIMITS*, Brad Wright admitted that he's not as satisfied with the results for reasons he can't express. "I think the performances were solid and direction was good," noted Wright. "It's just I had so much admiration for the short story, I don't think we quite lived up to it. It's just a gut feeling. I added everything from the [power pole] coming through the window [and] Stanley getting cut to raise the stakes a little bit. I think all that works quite well. The one big thing that I changed was Leslie's awareness of what's going on, to her not being aware of what's going on. Ultimately, I think that hurt the story."

But for science fiction novelist Larry Niven, author of the source material, Brad Wright's take on "Inconstant Moon" was a winner. As one of the most highly revered and much awarded science fiction authors living today, armed with five Hugos and a Nebula, Niven is best known as the author

“[That] Larry Niven was pleased with it makes me happy. My worst nightmare was to do a Larry Niven adaptation and have one of my favorite authors not like it.”

—Screenwriter Brad Wright—

of the *Ringworld* tetralogy. "I got some heat from purists," reported Niven. "It's true that the venue was moved from Westwood [in Los Angeles] to Canada, and the only thing that didn't change about the characters was the genders. Doesn't bother me! There were six billion stories in 'Inconstant Moon.' Some of them were very short, but I

could have told any of them with equal validity, and so could Brad Wright and *OUTER LIMITS*."

Niven is particularly delighted on this occasion because he's well aware that attempts to adapt a short story can sometimes lead to horrifying transmutations on film. The story can become unrecognizable after all the changes are made. "Scripters and novelists intermingle and we do hear horror stories," said Niven. "We learn to fear the involuntary collaborators in movies and television. None of the horror stories happened with 'Inconstant Moon.'

"One of the reasons was damage control by Brad Wright. I got lucky: Brad is a science fiction fan, a Niven fan. Naturally, he scripts superior science fiction. We kept in touch via electronic mail before and during shooting. I was even invited to fly to Canada and observe. But I chose against."

Although not directly based on "Inconstant Moon," filmmaker Steve DeJarnatt's 1989 feature *MIRACLE MILE* does approach similar territory. In his film, a musician accidentally intercepts a phone call and learns that the United States has launched missiles against the Russians. He realizes that he has limited time before the chaos descends. And during his precious little time

anthological) television is the brilliantly brief, shocking special effects dreamflashes as orchestrated by visual effects expert Steve Anker.

Brad Wright sells himself short when he expresses belief that Leslie's ignorance of the oncoming doom for most of the story "ultimately hurts." On the contrary, this is an asset to the tension of the drama. Both Stanley and we as an audience, know that eventually she will find out and we anticipate the event with dread. We feel for her. Leslie's anger at Stanley for withholding this important information is natural, expected and increases our sympathy for the two characters. Gleason wonderfully performs this scene with stark realism. After all, eliciting emotion from viewers is the name of the game isn't it?

Two notable fans of Niven's works, and of this story in particular are SF novelists and screenwriters Alan Brennert and Steven Barnes. Brennert said this production was his favorite for the second season. "I thought they did a terrific job. That's a story I've always admired a great deal," said Brennert. "I was interested in how they would produce it, because it's a tough story to adapt. I didn't actually see it as an *OUTER LIMITS* story but it was a faithful adaptation of the story, I thought."

"Brad Wright's writing was very strong," noted Barnes. "I don't think the changes hurt anything. I thought they did a good job."

"It's a prophetic story again," said Richard Lewis. "What if you had one day to live and what if you're afraid to tell everyone else? That's quite a burden. It's like *ON THE BEACH* by Nevil Shute which became the film with Gregory Peck. I think it's compelling."

"I loved the visuals on that. What we're doing on television is extraordinary looking. That whole skyline bursting into flames was incredible. Very special. Steve Anker and all those guys in special effects really nailed it. It was a little slow, but it was a challenge."

The reason this story works so well and has endured over the years has to do with our continuing fascination with disaster epics. "It's easier for the average viewer to identify with these characters than other disaster pieces," says Brennert. "You can see yourself in this story!"

See sidebar, page 60.

"I was afraid you'd run away before morning... but you'll get better when the sun comes up."
—Howie Morrison explaining himself to his tied-up sister Sheila

"I don't need your help. But you'll be needin' mine...tonight!"
—Jake threatening Sheila and Howie

FROM WITHIN

★★★

#34, 4/28/96. Written by Jonathan Glassner. Directed by Neill Fearnley.

In a small town, somewhere in the United

States, Retarded Neil Patrick Harris sees sister Christianne Hirt invaded by parasitic prehistoric worms to which he is somehow immune in "From Within."



States, diggers at a salt mine accidentally discover a cavern containing dinosaur bones. But, as a result, they also release into the world parasitic worms that physically invade human bodies and take them over. Slowly, the worms infect all the inhabitants of the town except for one young retarded man, Howie Morrison (Neil Patrick Harris). Because of genetic deficiencies in his biology, Howie is immune to the worms and he becomes frightened when his sister Sheila (Christianne Hirt) is also attacked by the worms. Despite Howie's mental retardation, he manages to understand that the worms don't like sunlight, so he takes his infected sister and ties her up outside waiting for the sun to rise. Freed from the worms, Sheila works with her brother to find a way to kill them and save the residents of the town.

"From Within" is a very offbeat, entertaining tale with vigorous character performances by Harris and Hirt. For a change Harris plays an idiot, not a brilliant medical doctor and he does so convincingly. Fearnley's direction and pacing keeps the drama moving forward. The special effects by Gajdecki and his team are seamless enough that it's difficult to tell which are live effects and which are CGI.

"They were, at the time we were making it, looking to experimenting in many ways," said Neill Fearnley. "We were instructed, 'Can we do a classic 1950's type science fiction takeover of a town story like *INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS* and can we do that and not be campy? Can we do that in a fashion that reminds us and harkens back to those small town invasion pictures that we all saw as kids?' Fearnley explains that the special effects were ambitious, requiring detailed discussions with effects maestro John Gajdecki and his crew. "That was a very difficult technical thing for us," he said. "you can imagine trying to get it done in seven days with very little money. I think the result was spectacular. We were all worried whether it would work at all. We were just being very focused and very clear. I think we achieved just about everything."



Army Captain Jasmine Guy and mercenary Colm Feore face a supercold alien creature that freezes everything in its path in "The Heist."

"If you open that box, you're dead!"

—Captain Terri Washington to the members of Lightning Dawn

THE HEIST

★ 1/2

#35, 5/05/96. Written by Steven Barnes. Directed by Brad Turner.

When a band of mercenaries looking for anti-aircraft Stinger missiles hijack a top security U.S. Army van in the black of night, they are startled to discover no missiles but a cryogenic containment case and one U.S. army female Captain named Washington (Jasmine Guy) hiding at the rear of the van. The leader of the terrorists, Major Mackie (Colm Feore), is very disappointed in his team for the failure of their mission. Angry and frustrated, they argue amongst themselves until one of the soldiers fires his

before the world vaporizes, he desperately hunts for the girl of his dreams, from whom he's been separated from. *MIRACLE MILE* is only similar to Niven's tale because it is an end-of-the-world story that focuses on a love relationship between a man and a woman on the eve of destruction. "I'm aware of it, but never seen it," mused Wright. "I was told that *MIRACLE MILE* was a ripoff of 'Inconstant Moon.'"

Niven made a party out of the telecast. "I invited friends over to watch [the episode]. We had a ball, and we all agreed: the story worked fine in this format," Niven said cheerfully. "The special effects were appropriate: they did their job. Remember, though, that those scenes all took place in the protagonist's head as he pictured things he could never see. They didn't have to be especially convincing.

"That's excluding the moon. That had to be convincing—and was. My moon was gibbous: fat but not full. There was a crescent, and I see why. It allows them to show Earthshine on the dark side! And that's brilliant." But Niven's knowledge of astronomical science also kicked in: "You don't get a crescent Moon at anywhere near midnight. Sorry!"

When it comes to characters, Niven also observed, "the protagonist made mistakes. Oceans don't flash to vapor instantly. It's only sunlight, even a thousand times augmented...but that constricting shock wave will indeed pick up megatons of water vapor, which will be further heated as it travels, so he's right about the hurricane of live steam.

"Wright asked if I mind their injuring the guy. I didn't. The barking dog was a useful addition: Leslie really would let him in sooner if he's adopted a dog. He smashed the jewelry store window. My character didn't. Wright's version sure makes better drama. "And all of this second-guessing doesn't obscure what they did: a wonderful adaptation of 'Inconstant Moon.' Finally!"

This tale has special meaning for the author, because when he wrote it 25 years ago, he didn't look very far to find a model for the main characters. "The major parts were played by me and my current wife, Marilyn, and our respective dwellings," Niven said.



Gross and Gleason, as they discover the preciousness of life on doomsday. Below: Looking at the moon, Gleason realizes that the sun has gone nova.



particular, he's a born tourist facing a gaudy, powerful civilization two hundred years advanced beyond our own, and he's forbidden to explore it!" Niven said this is good story to consider because it's a "cramped future, easy special effects, a powerful story done cheap."

"Leviathan!" is a story first published in *Playboy* 30 years ago. "Eleven hundred years from now, most animals have been extinct so long that nobody can tell the difference," said Niven. "Svetz sure can't. Svetz has been sent back to 1800-odd to get a whale. What he hooks is a giant sea serpent."

Most intriguing of the bunch for potential adaptation is probably "The Hole Man." Here, Niven quipped, "I'm assuming that most *OUTER LIMITS* watchers have at least wondered about mini-black holes. "This one's about a mini-black hole used as a murder weapon. A character study, mostly. And it won a Hugo, like 'Inconstant Moon.'"

Summing up, Brad Wright remarked, "I tried very hard to remain true to the spirit of the short story. [That] Larry Niven was pleased with it makes me happy. My worst nightmare was to do a Larry Niven adaptation and have one of my favorite authors not like it."

"I was treated with every courtesy and I hope it happens again," said Niven. □



David Hemblen shows prisoner Harley Jane Kozak that "The Camp" is run by androids badly in need of repair. Right: XFX's Leon Laderach prepares Rob Farrell.

that show. The fact is, that's what they thought the formula of the show was. It never varied! Why would you tune in if it's the same every week?"

The essence of what Densham laid down as law on the show via his bible was that "Each show must not be confusing," he said. "Must be simple. Must be approachable by the average Joe watching it, yet

at the same time it shouldn't demean by talking down to them. Also it must have a very clear path that there's a purpose to watch the story and should resolve itself in a way that's unique. It should be well-paced, because television audiences [are] even more impatient now than it was for the audience at that time [in the 1960s].

"In my bible I also created something in the nature of some 40 stories...which was a starting point for our thinking processes. I wanted to demonstrate that if we did take on OUTER LIMITS, that from that pool of

“Each episode must not be confusing. Must be approachable by the average Joe watching it...yet at the same time it shouldn't demean by talking down to them.”

—Exec. Prod. Pen Densham—

40 stories I created that there was a baseline of really good stories to start the series with. I didn't care whether my stories actually got developed. What I wanted to prove was that the stories themselves would be valid and so would the show itself. It was a way of saying, 'If we project OUTER LIMITS, if we did these stories, we'd have a good series. And there-

fore, it could work. I think about 11 of those stories were given to writers to choose.

"What we did is just give the bible to writers and say 'What do you think? Is there anything in there that you would like to amplify?' I didn't take credit for them. I just let them be seeds. So many of them were written around original ideas that I created and they became the emotional properties of the writers. I think it's very important for the writers to write something they discover in themselves. I don't think it's a good idea to try and impose stories on

writers. I think it's much better to try [to] have them organically connect to [the idea]. Then they deal with the emotional issues from their own psyche, which gives them a great power." Densham's insistence that writers unleash themselves and allow their imaginations to roam the spectrum of science fiction has imbedded itself in the very structure of the series' production.

"It's typical of my thinking...that I want us to honor the process of keeping a sense of

continued on page 70

rifle at the containment, freeing an alien creature that crash landed on Earth from deep space. The creature is apparently a living thing that is made of super liquid-hydrogen, freezing everything in its path—including humans. The mercenaries and Washington scramble for an escape, but the alien has frozen the entire interior of the building where they are trapped.

Literary allusions to THE THING, ALIEN and "Ten Little Indians" aside, this exciting and tension-filled drama with a formidable enemy is marred by photography so dark, it's difficult to see which character is speaking, and how many of them are there? Consequently, it becomes hard to follow the fast-paced events. The special effects point-of-view from the alien is a clever touch, but there is much to be desired in the depiction of the freezing alien as well. A more liquid conceptual design of the creature would have had a greater impact—like the pseudo-water pod from THE ABYSS. The editing cuts are so swift, it's almost as if the filmmakers were trying to avoid revealing the alien as much as they could as if to save money. And finally, Jasmine Guy as a U.S. Army Captain? Naaah. However, the freezing effect that kills two characters is positively cool and chilling (figuratively speaking, of course).

"The Heist was a good attempt at something that looked great on the page but was very hard to pull off," said Richard Lewis. "When you're basically trapped in this warehouse, not knowing that in hijacking this military truck there's a creature onboard. Then it goes around wreaking havoc. The challenge [is] visual, I think we pulled off some great effects. Perhaps it was a little too contained as a story. But we set the bar pretty high.

"It didn't have enough punch in the end. That's what we suffered from."

"They can change my body, but they cannot touch my soul."

—Sgt. Lyndon Stiles

AFTERLIFE

★★★★

#36, 5/19/96. Written by John Whelpley. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

Just as a former Army Captain Linden Stiles (Clancy Brown) is about to die by lethal injection, he is miraculously revived and offered an opportunity by a man named Maculhaney (Alan Rachins) to live if he agrees to serve as the subject of a military experiment. As Dr. Ellen Kursaw (Barbara Garrick) gives Stiles a series of injections, he physically transforms, in ways that are horrifying to both himself and the military observing him, into an alien humanoid. Throughout the proceedings, Stiles professes his innocence of the crime that he's accused of committing. From the start he is shown as a religious man, and his faith keeps him sane as the experiments proceed. Later, tired and angry at being a laboratory rat, Stiles breaks out of the glass cage where he's being kept and runs into the dense forest outside. General Post (Duncan Fraser) orders a commando team to pursue Stiles, and if necessary, shoot on sight.


continued on page 70

"Afterlife," an echo of the classic series as an innocent Army convict is transformed into an alien in a literally dehumanizing experiment.



Mark Hamill as Dr. Stein demonstrates the C.A.V.E., a virtual reality diagnostic device in second season's "Mind Over Matter."





Robert Culp as Mr. Trent
and Arlene Martel as
Consuelo Biros in Harlan
Ellison's "Demon With a
Glass Hand," the 10/17/64
episode of the original
OUTER LIMITS directed by
Byron Haskin, regarded as
one of the finest hours
of science fiction ever
on television, artwork
by Barclay Shaw.

OUTER LIMITS

Remembering the stuff that nightmares are made of.



By Frank Garcia

The original OUTER LIMITS has, without a doubt, left a lasting impression on an entire generation of television viewers. Growing up as children during the early 1960s, loyal fans can still recall classic scenes that left a permanent stamp on their memories and evoked many nightmares. Some of the image flashes that linger today for them include a super-soldier from the future who becomes trapped in our time, astronauts foiling with sand sharks on Mars, alien insects with human-like faces crawling down the walls of a building, a mysterious man with a glass hand who is pursued by hostile aliens throughout a building, a room of strings and clocks, or even an entire neighborhood block that disappears from the face of the Earth.

Almost everyone interviewed for this cover story had vivid childhood recollections of their first encounter with classic OUTER LIMITS, either in its original run between 1963 and 1965, or during later syndication. Those who work on the new series consistently recognize and admire classic OUTER LIMITS as well.

Noted Alan Brennert, novelist and screenwriter who wrote such episodes as "Second Soul," "The Refuge," "Dark Matters," and "Falling Star" [using the pseudonym Michael Bryant] "One of my most vivid OUTER LIMITS memories is not just the show but the trading cards they had. I remember buying those trading cards, and each one had a different monster on them, even the really stupid ones—the guy with the fried eggs eyes, even that was scary on trading cards!" [A complete collection of original LIMITS trading cards were

selling on the Internet starting at \$350 U.S.]

"I was a fairly regular viewer of the original run," said Brennert. "I remember years later when it was on syndication reruns at a local New York station. For some reason, when I was home sick, I had the misfortune of seeing the same episode repeated! It was one of the least interesting episodes, Eddie Albert and the intelligent tumbleweeds ["Cry of Silence"]. Every time I was home sick from school, I'd go, 'Oh, good! OUTER LIMITS is on!' I'd turn it on, and there'd be the damn tumbleweeds again!"

Brennert's favorite episode: "The Man Who Was Never Born." Essentially, Brennert opined, this episode was borrowed in great part for James Cameron's THE TERMINATOR. "If you look at the story, it's virtually identical. It's about preventing the birth of someone who will cause the destruction of the Earth, and winds up falling in love with his mother.

"Joe Stefano's episode 'A Feasibility Study' is a model of what a good OUTER LIMITS should be. It was scary and it was profoundly moving in the end. You have these people at an entire square block of middle America transferred to an alien planet. It's a feasibility study of an attempted takeover of the Earth. At the end, they sacrifice their own humanity, their appearance to save the rest of humankind. I thought that was an extraordinary episode."

Recalled Steven Barnes, nov-

elist and freelance screenwriter of "A Stitch in Time" and "The Heist," "The show came on during the weekends, Saturdays I believe. My family and I would just sit around and watch OUTER LIMITS. My Mom was really into it and so was my sister. I still remember 'The Zanti Misfits' crawling all over Bruce



John Hoyt as the Bifrost alien of "The Bellerose Shield," the 2/10/64 episode scripted by co-creator Joseph Stefano, about an extraterrestrial with an experimental laser device. Makeup by Gene Warren's Projects Unlimited.

Dem's hand.

"Years later, I met Joseph Stefano and his son who was taking martial arts classes with me in the afternoon. I have a picture of myself screaming with a Zanti crawling on my chest. I treasure that. There was some scary stuff, that's for sure. I think I just loved it."

Barnes' favorite episodes: Harlan Ellison's "Demon with a Glass Hand" and "The Zanti Misfits."

Noted John Symes, President of MGM-TV, "I would be less honest with you if I told you I was a science fiction buff. But I'm having great fun with this particular type of television. I have grown to really love this particular...genre. As much as there are fascinating stories and great special effects, thrills and chills that we bring to the show, what it really is, is a terrific piece of dramatic television. And dramatic television is certainly on the top of my list of things I want to work on."

Noted Mario Azzopardi, director of "The New Breed," "A Stitch in Time," "Resurrection,"

"I Hear You Calling," "Afterlife," "Paradise," and "Out of Body" among others, "I had seen the show when I was very young. I liked the series, and between that and TWILIGHT ZONE, it was always a great departure for opening the imagination. I was always fascinated by the end, you know, by the last five minutes of every show. It always propelled you into another story. That was always the frustration with OUTER LIMITS and TWILIGHT ZONE, that the end, the last minute of every show was of itself the springboard onto yet [another story]."

Jonathan Glassner, co-executive producer of years two, three, and four, noted, "I was familiar with it, not intimately," he said. "I remembered it when I was a kid. I remember it scaring the shit out of me but if you asked me to quote episodes, or tell you which was my favorites then, I couldn't have. Now I can because I've watched and studied them all. When they called me to do the show, I said, 'Oh, yeah! I used to be scared by that show.' But I couldn't tell you anything else other than that really. I remember it had cool monsters.

"Back then, it was 'The Zanti Misfits,' the little aliens...that image, I think, is just so memorable. When you look at it today, it's kind of funny, but back then it was...bugs...creepy. The other one that stuck out in my mind, was 'Architects of Fear.' I think it's one of the best ones of the past."

Noted Chris Dickie, story editor for years two and three, "I was first aware of [OUTER LIMITS] when I was quite young. What I remember most of all was the fact that I wasn't allowed to watch it! It was considered a little bit too scary. I told my parents I wanted to watch it. They said, 'No! It's too scary!' It wasn't until later, when I was a teenager, I started reading such great magazines as *Famous Monsters* that I became aware of and actually sought out the show. And, of course, I loved it.

"The funny thing is that it didn't give me nightmares. I remember loving 'The Zanti Misfits,' these little ant-like creatures that turn out to be criminals! And there was another one, 'Tourist Attraction,' with the creatures in



the lake. Those are the ones that come to mind from when I was a kid."

Recalled Larry Niven, SF novelist and writer of the short story "Inconstant Moon," which was adapted second season, "I remember the original OUTER LIMITS, but few details emerge. The opening was a promise: Get ready for a wild ride! I recognized the short-story source when murderous crabs emerged from the sands of a Martian desert (and I later used the notion myself). It was not all, not even mostly, science fiction. I have blurred memories of a lot of mystical crap, make-it-up-as-you-go-along. My memory has edited the details."

Noted Nick Mancuso, guest star of second season's "Resurrection," "I accepted the part without seeing a script. My agent called me up and said they were offering me an OUTER LIMITS. I said, 'Sure!' I've always liked the show. I used to be a big fan of the old show when I was a kid. I was also a big fan of TWILIGHT ZONE. But, OUTER LIMITS I've always had a special fascination. I had no idea how good or bad [working on the new show] would be. I just have a real childhood memory of the old OUTER LIMITS. It was pretty amazing, I thought. Some of them were as good, if not better,

“Joe Stefano’s episode ‘A Feasibility Study’ is a model of what a good OUTER LIMITS should be. It was scary and it was profoundly moving in the end.”

—Writer Alan Brennert—

than THE TWILIGHT ZONE.

"There were some pretty amazing shows. I can't remember now, but I was pretty impressed by it. It was particularly terrifying about a woman who was looking into a mirror. I can't remember which episode. It had something to do with mirrors. It frazzled me. It haunted me for weeks!" (This memory could be a reference to either "The Guests" or "Forms of Things Unknown.")

"The old one tended much more toward the sense of the Edgar Allen Poe vein, more haunting. It had a certain gothic tone and quality. I liked that element to it. Just as I liked some of my favorite horror movies of Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff. As a kid, those [were the] kinds of things I was into and meant a great deal. I loved OUTER LIMITS, TWILIGHT ZONE, NIGHT GALLERY, those kinds of shows."

Recalled Paul Lynch, the director of first season's "Second Soul" and "Dark Matters," "The one I remember the most for some reason, was the one that starred Simon Oakland and Mimsy Farmer ["Second Chance"]. I was a big fan of Simon Oakland. I don't remember any other episodes but I remember this one clearly. Simon Oakland as this creature... and I always remember the opening, with the radio voice.

It just stayed with me. But, I don't remember what my reaction to it was at the time."

Noted Mark Sobel, the director of first season's "The Choice" and "Caught in the Act," "When I was a kid, I couldn't wait to get home, I think it was Thursday nights, and I remember I had Cub Scouts, and that would interfere with my OUTER LIMITS viewing. I certainly tried never to miss a show. It scared the hell out of me. Some of the worst nightmares I had [were from] watching the OUTER LIMITS as a kid.

"I remember an episode of a guy who was brought down on some kind of a beam from people who were trying to communicate with other star systems. He presses this button and it puts this shield around him ['The Bellerro Shield'].

"It's very interesting, I worked with Martin Landau on a couple of independent films, and I didn't know that he had



David McCallum as a man who speeds-up his own evolution, in the 10/14/63 episode "The Sixth Finger."

done ['The Bellerro Shield'] till years later. That was the one that was burned into my brain as a kid. So, it's weird, after working with him on two independent films to later discover that he had been this guy that I kept seeing in my mind for so many years as a kid. It's really freaky.

"In fact, I was pitching to the [new] OUTER LIMITS guys that Martin also did another show, 'The Man Who Was Never Born,' and I was trying to get them to remake that. I was going to call Martin to see if he wanted to do it, but it never got off the ground.

"I remember another one about a box and it would suck you inside the box and [you'd] be trapped inside there? 'Don't Open Till Doomsday,' that's what it said on the box.

"I remember David McCallum, where he slowly turned into an alien with a big head ['The Sixth Finger.'] I remember he played the guitar. [Actually, it was a piano.] I don't even remember the storylines literally. I just have the images. As a kid

Allens William O'Connell and Dean Smith in "The Chameleon." This 4/27/64 episode, written by Robert Towne, starred Robert Duvall as a hit man assigned to kill aliens that crash-landed on Earth. Makeups by STAR TREK artist Fred Phillips.





The plant creature of "Counterweight," the 12/26/64 episode warning Earth not to colonize planet Antheon.

it was great, because I would sit there, with a blanket in our den, and watch the show and then just have nightmares at night!

"So, when my agent told me they wanted me to shoot the very first episode of the OUTER LIMITS in a new series, I thought it was real cool. I also got to work on LOIS & CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN. And as a child, I was a Superman collector, so between the two shows, all my boyhood fantasies came true!"

Brad Wright, the show's co-executive producer for years two, three, and four and screenwriter of first season's "Blood Brothers," "The Conversion," "Quality of Mercy," "The Message," "Voice of Reason," and second season's "Trial By Fire," "Inconstant Moon," "The Light Brigade" and year three's "The Camp," recalled, "It was one of my favorite shows to watch and listen to when I was a kid, because I had to go to bed. I remember listening to the Control Voice, 'We will control the horizontal...' and knowing that I wasn't

allowed to listen to it. That's my memory. Then, when I was a teenager, they were repeating it. I used to stay up late and watch it. Some of them were pretty cool. Every time someone recalls an OUTER LIMITS, they go, 'Oh yeah! Remember the one where...' and I go, 'That was TWILIGHT ZONE!' Everyone confuses the two of them! They're always cross-pollinating OUTER LIMITS with TWILIGHT ZONE. What I remember the most is 'Architects of Fear.'"

Noted Steve Geaghan, series production designer, "When I was a kid I watched religiously and I saw every episode, every week. Never, for a moment, I thought I would [later] be designing the show!"

"As a kid, all I read was science fiction. I couldn't stand 'real' literature. My father was a teacher, so as a result he said, 'Well, at least you're reading something.' So I read science fiction, watched OUTER LIMITS. When TWILIGHT ZONE came on, I thought that was pretty amazing. Shortly after that, OUTER LIMITS came on. That presented extremely sophisticated ideas for television."

"My favorite episode of all the OUTER LIMITS was 'The Sixth Finger.' My second favorite was 'Demon with a Glass Hand.' Then, I liked the really primitive one about the ant crea-

“I looked on it as an opportunity to do scary shows...I felt this was a good chance to take the reactions of PSYCHO and arouse them in the TV viewer.”

—Creator Joseph Stefano—

tures. I recall 'The Zanti Misfits' very vividly. Then there was 'Behold Eck.' I just loved that stuff.

"'Architects of Fear' I thought, as a kid, was the saddest story I had ever heard."

Recalled Brent Karl-Clackson, producer of years one through three, "I was very aware of the original show. As a matter of fact, I was a child of the 1950s, 1960s, and I was a TV/movie freak. I remember as a kid watching the previews of a new series coming on called THE OUTER LIMITS, and I was so excited that I could hardly wait to see it. I remember staying home, on the first night to see the first episode ['The Galaxy Being'] and it scared the living hell out of me."

"And I watched all the OUTER LIMITS. You know, memories are a very strange thing. The truth is, after I got this job, I watched all the original episodes

again and guess what? They weren't anything that I remembered them to be. They were very dated. They were very 1950-ish. The special effects, the monsters, and everything by today's standards were very corny.

"It just goes to show you, memories play all kinds of strange games with you. I was very surprised."

"Certainly, there's nothing wrong with the original stories. The original stories are still great as far as the writing, acting, cinematography, and the direction are concerned. It's just the prosthetics and visual effects [that don't hold up today]."

"When I saw the show as a kid, did they give me nightmares? Yes! Absolutely!"

Noted Sam Egan, co-executive producer for year three and screenwriter of "Second Thoughts."

"I was a big fan of SCIENCE FICTION THEATER and OUTER LIMITS. It was one of the formative parts of my childhood! I was 15 years old at the time. It had a great effect on me. Many of the episodes blend together the way they do from a childhood memory. But I remember the original 'A Feasibility Study' and it made quite an impression on me. I felt the imagery was very powerful. It had a different feel that almost

Geraldine Brooks and William Shatner in "Cold Hands, Warm Heart." Shatner made his first foray into outer space in this 9/26/64 episode, playing Brigadier General Jefferson Barton. The Astronaut General returns from Venus to train for Project Vulcan, (a Mars mission) only to find his body adapting to the Venusian atmosphere.



any other television show at the time [didn't have].

"What made a big impression to me was the title sequence. The whole notion that someone had taken control of my television set. 'We control the horizontal, we control the vertical...' Quite literally, as a child, I felt I was somehow drawn into something that was addressing me directly. I felt there was someone else in the room with me. It was chilling to feel that I was being addressed. It affected me powerfully."

Egan explained that as writers and producers, if they are successful in "creating a vivid impression to general adult audiences in the same way that a child might be affected by watching something that evokes awe and wonder, then I think we've been successful in crafting our story. That's sort of the implicit guideline I have for storytelling in the science fiction genre.

"The ones that stand out for me were 'I, Robot' and 'The Sixth Finger.' 'Architects of Fear' was a very good episode."

Recalled Richard Lewis, the series' executive producer, "I think [the original OUTER LIMITS] was way ahead of its time on an intellectual, emotional level. I think [the episodes] dealt with very controversial issues wrapped around science fiction so the audience didn't know how political everyone was being.

"I know Joseph Stefano now, and I know what he cleverly was trying to do. He had his own political, humanitarian point of view. And he used science fiction to raise those issues up. We're doing the same thing. I think they are about humanity, about good and bad. It's about the goals of humanity, how far society is willing to go and at what expense to make progress. Those issues are still very important today. We deal with them every episode."

Noted Pen Densham, Lewis's Trilogy Entertainment partner and the show's executive producer, "I saw a little bit on British TV. I don't think we saw the whole 49 episodes. I think we saw some along the way. I remember 'Zanti Misfits' for some reason, probably being the most powerful one I saw at that time. I don't think it was the most powerful show...it just



The alien invader of "O.B.I.T.," the 11/4/63 episode in which extraterrestrial surveillance technology gets put into human hands to lead the way to a full-scale invasion. Makeup created by Wah Chang.

stayed with me."

Recalled Joseph Stefano, the writer/producer of the original 1963 series, "It was dazzling, in all the sense of that word. I found myself in a place where not too many people were telling me what to do. It was much more like working with Hitchcock on PSYCHO, because Hitchcock would have nothing to say about a script other than that he wanted to shoot it or he did not want to shoot it. On OUTER LIMITS it was that kind of freedom. I wrote the scripts I wanted to write. First of all, I didn't really like SF. My whole career and life of movies was musical and glamour and tense, tight dramas. 'The Thing from the Black Lagoon' [sic] was not the kind of thing I would go out of my way to see.

"So when Leslie Stevens approached me to do OUTER LIMITS, I looked at it as an opportunity to do scary shows, and there was nothing scary on TV at that time. Lots of excitement, but to really scare people was not being done and I felt this was a good chance to take

the reactions of PSYCHO and arouse them in the TV viewer. I felt that once people saw PSYCHO, they were very happy to have seen it, no matter how scared they'd gotten. They enjoyed it, like a roller-coaster ride. 'Why not have a roller-coaster ride every night on Monday nights on television.'

Bill Hart as an ornithic primitive in "Fun and Games," fighting Nick Adams, transported to an alien arena to fight the warrior species in this 3/30/64 episode.



"When we took the pilot to New York for ABC, there were three men [network executives] sitting in front of Leslie and me, and the head of ABC turned around before the pilot started and said, 'I heard you wrote PSYCHO.' I said, 'Yes, I did.' And he smiled and turned around and looked at the screen. So he knew what he was in for. The pilot, 'The Galaxy Being,' was very scary, if you can picture it as it looked to people in 1963. It was very typical of the science fiction movies we had seen except that this one went a step further, and made the creature not look like an actor. Everything we had seen in films up till then we always knew that this was an actor underneath the costume. Here, we were using a very dazzling effect that scared the hell out of people. So the executives smiled after it was screened, and they left. A half hour later we were told we were picked up. I knew, without anyone telling us, that they wanted scary stuff. They wanted monsters. They had a wonderful way of telling you what they wanted without actually saying words.

Let these affectionate memories of the original series by those who are creating the new OUTER LIMITS be a testament that the series is in good hands. The emotional bonds by these skilled and experienced craftsmen to Joseph Stefano and Leslie Stevens' hallmark propels them forward into creating their own lasting legacy.

Of all the produced episodes of the new OUTER LIMITS, "Afterlife" is the one that provides the greatest echoes from the classic series. This storyline revives memories of "Architects of Fear" and "The Chameleon" without actually being a direct descendant of those stories. All three stories, of course, deal with humans purposely transforming into aliens. It's interesting to see Clancy Brown imbuing Stiles' characterization with a quiet performance despite his progressively changing prosthetic makeup. Also curious to note is that Stiles acts and says he's learning more about being human in spite of the altering mutation. Azzopardi's moody direction showcases Steve Geaghan's production design of the military containment complex. Much credit also goes to Phil Linzey's sweeping cinematography. Toward the finish, Stiles surrenders to Maculhaney's commandos, and director Azzopardi films him as if crucified, the alien spines growing from his wrists resembling the nails in the Christ's hands.

"Mario Azzopardi created a great visual palette," said Richard Lewis. "I think Clancy Brown is a gentle giant. He's got a little bit of Lon Chaney in him. You know its going to explode out of him. It's interesting to watch his performance and his character evolve."

"What if you were faced with a choice of being executed for something you know you didn't do and then having a second chance at life. Then, they lie to him because they want to do an experiment on him. What they don't tell him is they're transmuting him genetically. It's a real Frankenstein story and very powerful in the sense of betrayal he feels from his comrades."

"It's a good morality tale," Lewis continued, "and I thought his character was a very noble giant. Misunderstood."

"There are many aspects of 'Afterlife' that are like Classic OUTER LIMITS," noted Brad Wright. "And yet, when it was pitched to us, it harkens to the other episodes without being derivative and I think that's terrific. That's one of our audience wants, and that why that's one of our strongest episodes, too."

"I...I didn't realize deprogramming was this brutal."

—Jill Cooper to Prof. Davis

"Look, we're trying to reclaim a life here. You of all people should want that."

—Prof. Davis to Jill Cooper

"I...am...not...Jollem! My name is Evan!... My name is Evan."

—Evan Cooper confronting his ex-master Koltok

THE DEPROGRAMMERS ★★1/2

#37, 5/26/96. Written by James Crocker. Directed by Joseph L. Scanlan.

In a world where aliens have conquered the Earth, human Evan Cooper (Erich Anderson) has

Collaborator Erich Anderson (r) gets grilled by Brent Splner of Earth's underground resistance to alien invaders in "The Deprogrammers."



quality and commitment," said Densham. "One of the issues I was most concerned about when I created the show, was to do what I call 'open architecture creative team.' My feeling [was that] there were some shows, STAR TREK and X-FILES being good examples, where the originator is very tied to keeping a supervisory role over everyone else. It becomes hierarchical in the storytelling, because that person understands the most, the ongoing characters that they have."

"My instinct was to try this experiment of reversing that. Each individual should be able to create the stories that they believe should be made and champion them. There should be no one arbiter of what's right or wrong. We have a loose committee system. There's an advocacy system for stories, but there's no genuinely hard or single decision maker." In effect, Densham wants those in the front lines of writing and producing the series to feel they can go to the generals, commanders and say, "We've got to do this script!"

"Let's say, for example, we have a story we're pitching to MGM and see how they feel about it," explained Densham. "They say 'No.' We would go back to them and say, 'Listen, we really want to develop this one!' and they'll say, 'Yes!' It's not that hard and fast. It's really a very open system and by including the MGM team in the creative process, we've actually opened up the doors to having our own creative writers being able to feel they can lobby for and get support in tackling stories that may not originally seem successful. Sometimes a story will grow. You start out with a concept and it doesn't quite gel as you hoped it would. Sometimes by reengineering the concept you can turn it around. I didn't want to create a story environment where a story is dead. I wanted an environment where people can take that passion and try and rework it and find solutions."

"Some of the stories that I've loved took a while to get through the system." One example of this noted Densham, was "Unnatural Selection," a story that he co-devel-

“The personnel working on the series are very committed....a team approach to creativity, except each one gets to write their own creative desires.”

—Exec. Prod. Pen Densham—



Jane Heltmeyer as the "perfect wife" in second season's "First Anniversary," based on a story by Richard Matheson.

oped with writer's assistant Eric Morris.

"The personnel working on the series are very committed. They're very open and collaborative with each other. You see a team approach to creativity except each one also gets to write their own creative desires."

To assemble a creative and production team to craft the first season of the new series, Trilogy sought out Alan Brennert, who previously held story consulting staff positions at BUCK ROGERS (1979), WONDER WOMAN (1978) and the new TWILIGHT ZONE (1985-86). "I was actually one of the first people they approached about running the show," said Brennert. "And I told them I wasn't really very interested. Part of it was that the location was just so far from Los Angeles and I didn't want to relocate and there were other factors." But Brennert eventually agreed to write for the show. He's written approximately two scripts each season.

Another veteran of the SF television genre who was contacted to write scripts was former STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION writer and SLIDERS co-creator Tracy Torme. He was an avowed fan of the classic series, but he had ongoing projects and couldn't participate.

Producer and screenwriter J. Michael Straczynski confirmed that he was also someone briefly considered to helm the show when it looked like the first season of his series BABYLON 5 in 1994 wasn't going to be renewed. "I demurred and they said, 'Well, would you be a consultant to the show?' At the time the stories they had, in my view, were dreadful," said Straczynski. "I really wanted no part of it. What they gave me as stories that they were going after, were just atrocious. They ended up with Michael Cassutt, who actually helped them because he threw out most of the awful, awful stories and forced on some better stuff."

As Trilogy's point man, as series co-executive producer for the first six episodes of the show, Michael Cassutt had solid credits in film, television and SF genre prose. "I believe my first day [on THE OUTER

continued on page 74

OUTER LIMITS

EPISODIC AUTEUR

Never say "It's only television" to director Mario Azzopardi.

By Frank Garcia

"He's passionate! That's a rarity in this business. A lot of people don't have a lot of passion. They just do the job. He's quite a terrific, versatile director. He's one of these people that instills tremendous enthusiasm in anything that he does. He really cares about what he does."

That's actor Nick Mancuso raving about his old friend, director Mario Azzopardi. Mancuso and Azzopardi have known each other for years, and have worked together many times. "Mario always creates an atmosphere of creativity," said Mancuso, who was directed by Azzopardi in the second season episode "Resurrection." "He makes it enjoyable. Your attention is on the task at hand. You don't get bored!"

Mario Azzopardi is a Malta-born director who's made an indelible stamp on the science fiction/fantasy television genre. He started out directing in the genre with the premiere episode of the syndicated series *CAPTAIN POWER & THE SOLDIERS OF THE FUTURE* ["Shattered"] in 1987. As the years went by, Azzopardi would consistently swing back and forth between police crime dramas and SF/fantasy or action shows. The crime dramas included *COUNTERSTRIKE*, *NIGHT HEAT*, *TOP COPS*, *TRUE BLUE*, *BOOKER* and *WISE GUY*. The genre shows included an association with Pet Fly Productions producers Paul DeMeo and Danny Bilson, directing episodes of their series *HUMAN TARGET*, *THE FLASH*, and *VIPER*. In Canada, Azzopardi focused on *ROBOCOP*,



Clancy Brown as Army Captain Linden Stiles, abducting Duncan Fraser, in Azzopardi's "Afterlife," a four star episode of a soldier subjected to experimentation that turns him into an alien.

KUNG FU, *M.A.N.T.I.S.*, *SLIDERS* and *HIGHLANDER*.

Directing on the *OUTER LIMITS* was powerfully challenging for Azzopardi, who went on to direct episodes of *STARGATE SG-1* and the pilot for *TOTAL RECALL*. Noted Azzopardi, "In *OUTER LIMITS*, we don't crash cars; we crash people together. The science fiction element is the background. The science fiction element is the platform which we choose to crash people on. The beauty of it is the special effects are

been programmed into being a slave for the alien leader Koltok (Vincent Hammond). But one day, Cooper is snatched by the underground resistance and is taken to an abandoned television station where Trent Davis (Brent Spiner) and Cooper's wife Jill (Nicole Oliver) work hard to deprogram and help him remember what it's like to be human again. But Davis has a larger, more sinister plan. He wants to use the deprogrammed Cooper to assassinate Koltok. The success of this mission has more benefits for Davis than the Coopers ever realized...

Screenwriter James Crocker deserves much credit for cleverly constructing a script that as we follow Davis in his arduous deprogramming of Evan Cooper, we're not quite sure what is the purpose behind all this? Along the way, we learn about the world that has become after the alien invasion—a dark and bleak future.

It's great to see Brent Spiner in a different role other than Data in *STAR TREK: TNG*, and have him reunited with Erich Anderson who appeared as a guest star in *NEXT GENERATION* episode "Conundrum," and with director Scanlan who also directed for that show. Spiner and Anderson's joint performances with Nicole Oliver are finely tuned. Scanlan's direction adds to the tension of this story which is almost a bottle show in that there seems to be only three or four sets in the entire show.

"The Deprogrammers" is yet another episode that illustrates *THE OUTER LIMITS'* facility of conjuring surprising and delightful twist endings. Spiner's character actually recalls the Nazi collaborators of World War II.

"Brent [Spiner] was terrific," said Richard Lewis. "Brent did a great job. I think it's good for him to get parts very different than what he plays on *STAR TREK*. That was a good futuristic, honest-to-god *OUTER LIMITS* story. There's physical battles and intellectual arm-wrestling going on. What if people aren't telling you the truth, who's really in charge? You have a little bit of 'Beyond the Veil' in there."

"I loved your father so. If only he was still here, still young. Then it would be easy to fulfill my promise."

—*Sylvia Middleton to her son Jimmy*

"This is perfect. A place surrounded by love. Love of family. Love of each other. This is so perfect. We will create a miracle here."

—*Helen to Jerry*

PARADISE

★★★1/2

#38, 6/16/96. Written by Jonathan Walker and Chris Dickie. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

In a small town in the United States, Sheriff Grady Markham (Geriant Wyn Davies) and his wife, Dr. Christina Markham (Mel Harris) become baffled by the death of two elderly women, who arrive at the morgue appearing very, very old. Meanwhile, Christina's mother Helen (Maxine Miller), who's being cared for by her uncle Gerry

The luminous climax to "Paradise," one of the strangest *OUTER LIMITS* yet produced which leaves the viewer with a warm and fuzzy feeling.



(Harold Gould) and is experiencing Alzheimer's disease, frightens Christina with talk of "entering the light." Elsewhere, the Deputy sheriff, James Middleton (Timothy Webber) has a one-night stand with a beautiful woman who suddenly metamorphoses into a terribly old woman—and dies. Later, he encounters a very young woman who looks remarkably like his mother when she was in her 30s. Events turn frantic when Christina and Grady discover that Gerry and Helen have left their beds in the middle of the night.

This is one of the strangest OUTER LIMITS tales yet produced. As a mystery, it pulls you into the drama with this cast of characters and as the secrets begin to reveal themselves, the answers are totally unexpected and surprising. As with many other episodes, the climax is profoundly moving and compassionate. The ending leaves you with a warm and fuzzy feeling. As long as the producers are willing to provide an eclectic mix of dark and compassionate endings, the show will do just fine. A round of applause for everyone involved in this production.

"Let me tell you one thing. First and foremost: I am the first person to hate everything until I hear what people say," declared director Mario Azzopardi. "I was surprised to learn, and very glad to learn, how much this story touched people. I'm told that people cried at the end of the show. You know, when the baby is born and when her mother recognizes her daughter, and they think it's a monster at first, then they open up the cocoon and you find a perfect baby."

"It was great working with Geriant Wyn Davies and a great cast of ladies, beautiful ladies. We talked at the heart, you know. Very emotional subject matter. The joy and mystery of being parents. We tried to talk to that."



STAR TREK's Wai Wheaton takes another space voyage in Brad Wright's deliciously dark follow-up to first season's "Quality of Mercy."

"If we don't get inside that compartment, the war is over! Do you understand what the stakes are here? We are the last chance!"

—Chief Weapons Officer to Skokes

"You can't win if you give up the fight!"

—Skokes to Chief Weapons Officer

"My father gave a speech at a war rally about a year ago. He said that humanity would triumph so long as we had hope. He said that in every one of us there is a hero, and that in our darkest hour that hero would rise up and we would honor him for all time."

—Cadet to Skokes

THE LIGHT BRIGADE

★★★★

#39, 6/23/96. Written by Brad Wright. Directed by Michael Keusch.

Some time after the events of "Quality of Mercy," we revisit Major John Skokes (Robert Patrick) onboard the spacecraft "Light Brigade." They're on a doomsday mission to deliver a bomb to the enemy aliens' homeworld. But when an



Azzopardi's directorial debut on the series was first season's "The New Breed," as scientist Dr. Stephen Ledbetter (Richard Thomas) attempts to save his brother (Peter Outerbridge as Andy).

subjugated to the human qualities, the human tragedies and the human dilemmas that are the central theme of the show. The theme of the show is not the props; it is the human soul caught in the props."

Being a visual storyteller is what Azzopardi sees as his only agenda. To begin that process, Azzopardi engages in what he calls a ritual. "When I read a script, it's very important, the first read," said Azzopardi. "I close the doors. I drink all the four corners of the first [reading] and I'm not going to talk to anybody for a couple of hours. As I read the script, there are images that are going to pop out and they're going to imprint themselves on my brain. I am a visual person. I express myself in visual elements. I communicate with vision. This is what makes me a director. My brain starts to compute what elements I want to stress. What makes me a good storyteller, hopefully, is the choice of what I like—what an audience likes and the producer likes."

Halfway through the process of filming a particular episode, Azzopardi will take a moment to begin preparing for the next adventure. Noted Azzopardi of his focus,

"The process of actually going to the set every morning, and trying to regurgitate for yourself these images and having them done according to what your psyche demands is a huge effort! What I put up on the screen is very personal. There are shows where I did very badly because I couldn't bring myself to respect the material enough to give it all of myself. Every little episode is a child. I'm very fearful, because I always feel like a parent

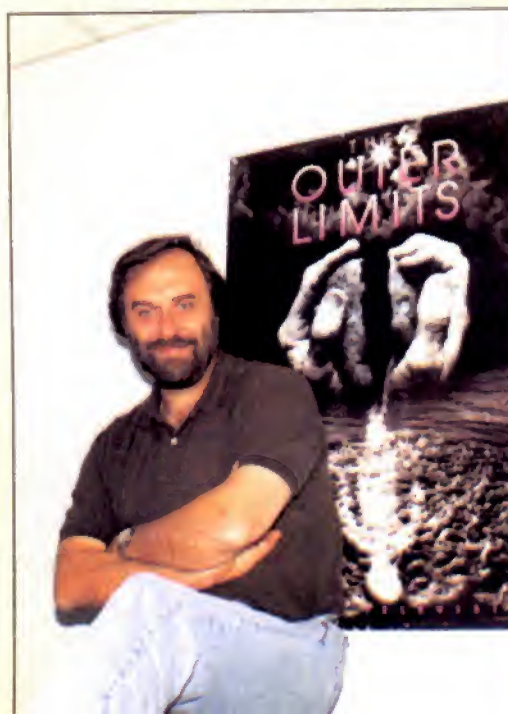
does. That I could have done more for that child. That I could have done better."

Because OUTER LIMITS is filmed in an average of a seven or seven and a half day schedule, "there is really no time to think. And I rely on the fact I've only done this my whole life," sighed Azzopardi. "I find with OUTER LIMITS that you come into it with absolute passion and you allow yourself to get merged with the show, and you give of it all you've got. I hate that when people say it's only television."

Azzopardi's in rapture directing for OUTER LIMITS because it is a series that is so free of conformity and rules. "Everything else has to conform," explained Azzopardi. "To a character that's already established, to a set that's already built, to a modus operandi that's already established, to an outcome already established. But here, there are no rules!"

Only in this anthological format, Azzopardi noted, "as a director, you are being asked to create" instead of being that someone on other shows who merely implements the technical or directing requirements and isn't asked for any creative input. As an example of how this show differs from "regular" episodic television, Azzopardi explained that every episode is ground zero and the filmmakers have to capture their audience quickly. "With OUTER LIMITS there is a new character every show. Unless one gets it in the first few minutes of the show, it is going to be very difficult to bring that audience onto the bandwagon of the show because we've got to state our position, our situation in the first five

Azzopardi in his office at Vancouver's Bridge Studios, bringing a European visual sensibility to the series.





Left: Heather Graham and Nick Mancuso as robots of a far flung future when mankind is extinct in Azzopardi's "Resurrection." Right: Mancuso as Martin, crucified for his betrayal of the robot society.

minutes effectively and concisely."

Azzopardi noted that the hardest thing to do is hide this exposition and not do it at the expense of storytelling. "We have to interlace it into the story," said Azzopardi. "Not only that, we have to do it in the most economical way because we don't have time. We have 44 minutes to tell the story. All the background and baggage has to be contained in that."

Azzopardi directed 13 shows in the first three seasons and directed fourth season's "The Hunt." Azzopardi assured that the creative environment of THE OUTER LIMITS is "extremely unusual! The producers have been generous to the artists who work for them in ways that [have] been very different from other shows. "You find that in most television shows, one producer rules. Everything has to go towards a vision. One central vision that permeates over everything in the episode. This is not the case in OUTER LIMITS [where] an effort by the producers allows the directors and the artists involved to create out of their own imaginations. In OUTER LIMITS, you are encouraged to use your talents rather than subjugate your talents to a central leading force."

For "Resurrection," a favorite episode, the producers gave Azzopardi a relatively free rein to shape the script elements, such as the design of the costumes, the visuals and even the method of robot Cain's entrance into the story. Contrary to the script's birthing Cain in a vat, Azzopardi "created a virtual womb on a pedestal which [Cain] comes out of."

Mancuso and Heather Graham's emo-

“Every little episode is a child. I’m very fearful, because I always feel like a parent does. That I could have done more...that I could have done better.”

—Director Mario Azzopardi—

tionally "flat" performances were also deliberate. "That was a very conscious choice," said Azzopardi. "These are robots. There is no emotion whatsoever. It was discovered during rehearsal that if there is no emotion, there is no inflection. If there is no inflection, there is a monotone. All the emotion had to come out of the actor playing the human [Dana Ashbrook]. And

everything else is dead. We kept reshooting until I got that absolute monotone from the actors."

"Afterlife" was another special show for Azzopardi because it was a landmark moment for the show's cinematography. For the first time, a customized 6mm camera lens was utilized for the show. "When we were using it, we were the only company in the world using a 6mm lens for 16mm [film]," said Azzopardi excitedly. The 6mm lens is an extremely wide angle lens, capturing more image real estate into the film than other lenses. "I experimented with something that has become my style now, which is to go from extremely wide to extremely tight, countered by a sound cue that really tells the story well. I have found this to be a most effective way in editing, when you plan a wide-angle and smash-cut to a tight angle. There's a certain sense of drawing in an audience into your picture, into your subject when you do this."

Noted Azzopardi about his work on THE OUTER LIMITS, "There's no egos here. No kowtowing to big stars, that suddenly, because this has gone to a [fifth] season, the world revolves around them. There's no one that feels that they are the only, the most important element of the show." □

attack from the enemy cripples the ship and radiation almost kills everyone, four crewmembers—Skokes, a cadet (Wil Wheaton), the Chief Weapons Officer (Graham Greene) and Boromir (Adrian Hughes)—band together to get to the Bridge so they can arm the doomsday bomb and release it to the enemy planetary target. With most of the ship awash in radiation, the four crawl and climb their way through the ships' access hallways towards the Bridge.

Brad Wright's brilliance shines once again in this script with four dynamo actors who each deliver bravura performances. It's a script that intertwines characterization with plot progress. Steve Geaghan's production design brings a freshly innovative hardware realism to the episode. And let's not forget the superb opening shot in the teaser where we catch a glimpse of the galactic conflict. The final scene of this dramatic spectacle—the best of the season—will leave you gasping for a long time to come.

Cleverly hidden in this episode, revealing Brad Wright's love for the SF & fantasy literary genre, is an oblique nod to J.R.R. Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings* fantasy series. The Brigade crewman, Boromir, is also the name of a Tolkien hero, a companion to Frodo. "You are the only one to figure that out!" quipped Wright. "He's one of my favorite heroic characters from *Lord of the Rings*."

See sidebar, page 87.



Sheena Easton is a suicidal singer whose teenage mirror image, a fan from the future, saves her life in the intriguing "Falling Star."

"Do you believe in miracles?"

—Melissa McCammon to her husband Terry

"There are failsafes to prevent the traveler from affecting the past...but I broke the rules. I had to pass some of the restraints. I saved you."

—Rachel to Melissa

FALLING STAR ★★

#40, 6/30/96. Written by Michael Bryant (Alan Brennert). Directed by Ken Girotti.

Just as a suicidal singer Melissa McCammon (Sheena Easton) is ready to end her life, a strange apparition appears and enters her body. Looking into the mirror, McCammon is disoriented to see not herself but a teenager who encourages her not to kill herself. Later as McCammon and her band continue their tour, McCammon comes to realize that the teenager who appears and disappears from the window is Rachel (Sarah Strange), a fan from the future. Rachel sent her consciousness into the past to join with Melissa and share in the experience of the singer's life. However, events take a turn when enforcers from the future arrive and accuse Rachel of committing the most serious crime of changing the fate of McCammon's life—and therefore, the future.

It's a story like "Falling Star" that illustrates how varied topics can become in THE OUTER LIMITS. Sheena Easton is credible as McCammon,

there's certainly no difficulty in believing she lives a singer's life. The problem lies in the screenplay which tries to do a Janis Joplin/Buddy Holly allegory that attempts to show how one musician's incandescent talent "changes the world" with her talent. Well, this is a lot of power assigned to one song! And when we heard that song, it's a nice tune, but...

Plus, how does a mere fan manage to break through "safeties" of the consciousness-sending equipment and allow McCammon to see and hear her and prevent the enforcers to yanking Rachel from the equipment? The software of the future must have awfully weak encryption/restricted access protocols! To solve this, all Rachel has to do is identify herself as a computer programmer who happens to be a McCammon fan.

"I don't think we created a song that's going to change the world, but the story still holds up about a character who ends her life as Janis Joplin did," said Richard Lewis. "This is a great premise! What if fans from the future get to live in the body of the celebrity they most admire? What a freaky idea. Instead of going to Disneyland you actually become Janis Joplin for a day. This woman was about to die and she doesn't. So now she's living on borrowed time. That was a good story and I thought Sheena did a great job. The music, for what we're doing, I thought played great. I thought it was emotional."



Joely Fisher uses a chimp to test a revolutionary machine that provides an "Out of Body" experience that frees the soul to roam at will.

"Many of us here believe that you are the person that's finally going to prove that each and every one of us has a real live soul. My question to you is: When are you going to put a real live, honest-to-goodness human being in that chamber of yours?"

—Reporter to Dr. Rebecca Warfield

"Man's arrogance must be stopped! Science is not divine."

"You, Wymer, are."

—conversation between Amy Wymer and Dr. Rebecca Warfield

OUT OF BODY

★★★

#41, 7/14/96. Written by James Crocker. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

When scientist Dr. Rebecca Warfield (Peri Gilpin) fails to receive an important funding grant to proceed with her experiments to prove that "out of body" experiences can be achieved through a revolutionary machine, in her anger, she uses herself as a test subject. The result is catastrophic. She's become a ghost and no one can see or hear her, not even her fellow scientist Amy (Joely Fisher), or her husband Ben (Victor Garber). As Warfield floats around while her physical body has been moved to a hospital, she learns that Joely has hidden misgivings of the nature of the project and is secretly collaborating with a religiously-driven man named John

continued on page 80



Len Cariou as Father Anton Jonascu is given healing powers by his physician (Chris Sarandon), part of an alien contingent in first season's "Corner of the Eye."

LIMITS] was May 9, 1994. Immediately, they said, "Let's get the show started, let's find an office to work," said Michael Cassutt, who still had the job of building a senior writing staff and looking for two additional writers. "Jonathan Glassner was someone I've wanted to work with several times in the past. We'd crossed paths before. He was a natural choice be-

cause although he's not really a science fiction writer per se, he's done some film and TV. He's done quite a good job. Manny Coto was a writer I first met years ago, when he was starting out and I was a junior staff writer on TWILIGHT ZONE. He came in to pitch. I knew his stuff very well and we'd cross paths. I'd seen his work here or there and I'd seen his name. He came in to pitch a story that was well thought-out. He had great enthusiasm in the project.

"We hired both of them, but they weren't

working until July 1994. I was on my own for the first month and then they came in. Trouble was, by mid-August, I disconnected with the whole operation in Los Angeles and went up to Canada to start supervising and being the writer on-site in Vancouver as production started up. It was me, Glassner and Coto as the staff of writers.

"I drove up to Vancouver with the idea that I'd be there for the first six episodes. My contract called me to be the co-executive producer for that point. It was clear in my mind

"You get more bang for your buck [filming in Vancouver]. The downside, frankly, is that you're filming a television show in another country."

—Exec. Prod. Richard Lewis—

and in everyone's mind that we would evaluate the situation after that."

All the parties involved decided to film the series in Vancouver, Canada, where many SF shows were already filming. TV series such as THE X-FILES, HIGHLANDER, SLIDERS, and the aforementioned M.A.N.T.I.S. were all genre products that were bumping into each other in the streets.

Now partnered with the Canadian production company, Atlantis Films, Ltd., (they gave us TEKWAR and RAY BRADBURY THEATER), Trilogy and MGM-TV took root in the outskirts of the city at The Bridge Studios where MACGYVER filmed for five years. Later, Richard Lewis' own creation, POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY, would use the same studio lot as well, and MGM's STARGATE opened their offices on the lot in the spring of 1997.

continued on page 80

Peri Gilpin plays a researcher who devises a machine that frees her spirit from her body in second season's "Out of Body."



OUTER LIMITS

Testing the limits: finding new ways to revive a much-loved series from the Sixties.

by Frank Garcia

"There is nothing wrong with your television set. Do not attempt to adjust the picture. We are controlling transmission. If we wish to make it louder, we will bring up the volume. If we wish to make it softer, we will tune it to a whisper. We will control the horizontal. We will control the vertical. We can roll the image; make it flutter. We can change the focus to a soft blur or sharpen it to crystal clarity. For the next hour, sit quietly and we will control all that you see and hear. We repeat: there is nothing wrong with your television set. You are about to participate in a great adventure. You are about to experience the awe and mystery which reaches from the inner mind to the outer limits."

The Control Voice,
from 1963

As a sine wave traveled across the screen, these words, this poetry, from the speakers of black and white television sets across the United States on the evening of September 13, 1963, was the birth cry of THE OUTER LIMITS.

"When I first thought that up, I was sitting in an office, and [the ABC network executives] said, 'What are you going to do for a host on the show?' I said, 'We're not going to have a host, your television set is going



Robert Culp in "Architects of Fear," playing Allen Leighton, a scientist who transforms himself into an alien to provide a threat to world peace to unite mankind politically.

to turn off,' and I heard myself saying, in the back of my head, 'What the hell are we getting into here?' I said, 'There will be a Control Voice. It's going to say, we're taking over. There will be nothing wrong with your television set. We'll control it for the next hour. We'll make it roll and flutter.' I knew we could match the effects on the screen as to what will happen on our television sets. And that it would intrigue people. And [we] did."

That's creator and executive producer Leslie Stevens recalling the origins of the original series' opening narration.

Today, those words are synonymous with THE OUTER LIMITS and the mere mention of the opening sentence, or even a fragmented passage brings a warm smile, or maybe a shudder, for aficionados who recall the show with reverence.

Whenever someone "remakes" or "brings back" a much-loved or classic property to television or film, inevitably what greets it is The Comparison. Discussions ensue among the die-hard fans and general viewers, nitpicking the "new" and throwing it against the "old" and deciding whether the work has been

faithfully rendered. The ideal goal for producers is to create something new that stands on its own two feet, gains its own identity with an acknowledgement of the roots that spawned the revival.

For perspectives on the matter, we talked to several of the creative talents connected with both the old and the new OUTER LIMITS.

Screenwriter and SF novelist Alan Brennert, who was story consultant on the CBS revival of THE TWILIGHT ZONE in 1985 and contributor to the new OUTER LIMITS with four scripts, compared the Trilogy edition with the original OUTER LIMITS series. "It is a very different show, in many ways, from the original series. I think they're trying to be faithful to the original series. You can't reproduce a

show [exactly]. Time has moved on and I think a lot of people say, 'Oh, the new TWILIGHT ZONE wasn't the same as the original TWILIGHT ZONE' and 'the original OUTER LIMITS isn't the same as the new OUTER LIMITS.' I think if you actually gave them a letter-perfect reproduction of the original show, people would just turn up their nose at it and say, 'Oh, it's just a ripoff of the original.' I think you have to make adaptations and changes in any show for each new generation. Our TWILIGHT ZONE very specifically set out to do



Classic shows: Michael Ansara and Lloyd Nolan (top) in Harlan Ellison's "Soldier." Below: Jill Haworth and David McCallum in "Sixth Finger."



something that was faithful to the spirit of the original TWILIGHT ZONE, but in some ways [was] an evolution, a different show, because we were all different writers than Rod Serling, Charles Beaumont and Richard Matheson."

Co-executive producer Brad Wright recommends a moderate approach in continuing the series for the 1990s. "I think it has to be a combination. There are a huge number of fans out there that love the old OUTER LIMITS. [The producers] want to keep those fans. We want to deliver, to capture, some of what they liked. But, at the same time, the old OUTER LIMITS was looking at a universe and a world that's very different than where we are now.

"Computers and space were

new. There are things in our life that just aren't as new as they were on [classic] OUTER LIMITS. We have to have a new look to it. We don't have any choice. If we went back and re-examined the same issues from [that] point of view, it would seem old."

Alan Brennert does have a specific insight, however. "I was not privy to the conceptualization of the new OUTER LIMITS—I'm just a freelancer—but I do think there's one improvement between the original series to the new one, and that was the new show did not require to have the bear on the beach every week."

When Brennert says "bear," he's merely referring to a nickname that developed on the show for the appearance of a monster on the screen. "[In 1963], ABC was very adamant that every week...there be a bear on the beach, regardless [of] how silly-looking they sometimes appeared. In the new OUTER LIMITS, that is not a requirement, to have a monster every week. In fact, I asked about that, and they said, 'No, no. If you want to put one in, fine...'"

Of the first 44 episodes of the new OUTER LIMITS there are, at best, less than a dozen episodes that can be considered as having bear elements. Although monsters can make a show less dimensional if the makeup is executed badly or if such creatures appear too frequently, they still evoke affection. "I think everyone looks upon the monsters from the original OUTER LIMITS with a great deal of fondness. And in writing, I certainly have occasionally thrown in a monster, just because it's fun to do!" chuckled Brennert.

But Brennert also remembers an example from the original series of how "throwing in monsters" can crimp a story. "In David Duncan's 'The Human Factor,' about memory transfers, the story is just about two guys whose consciousness are exchanged," said Brennert. "They needed a monster for it, so they have this recurring vision of a man who had frozen to death in this ice-encrusted spectre who appears throughout the episode. It

“I think there's one improvement between the original and the new: the new show doesn't require the bear on the beach every week—a monster every show.”

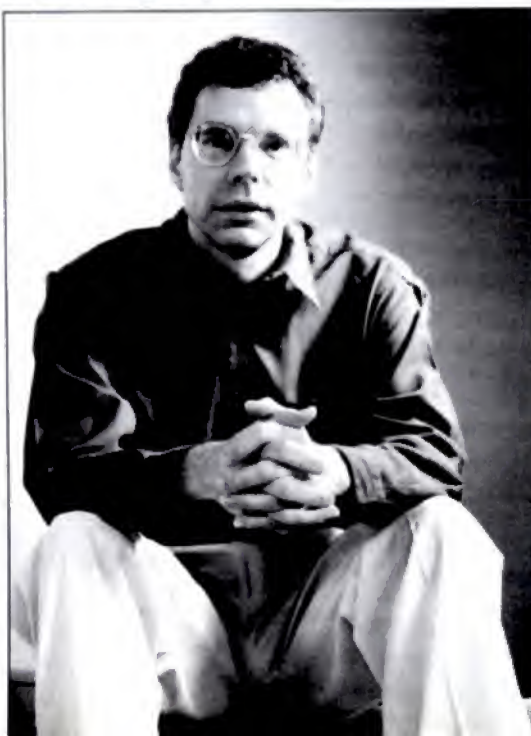
—Alan Brennert, writer—

didn't have to do with anything, it was just thrown in to just have a monster."

Creator and executive producer of the original series Leslie Stevens noted that he felt there were advantages to not having bears so frequently in an OUTER LIMITS episode. "In some ways, it's probably good because it allows for a broader range of characterization," said Stevens. "You don't have to have a threatening, awful thing happening each time. The network originally never believed in [the series]. They never thought it would go, and in thinking [the series] wouldn't work well, they thought a monster show would work well, so they were saying, 'Secretly make it a monster show,' and we were saying, 'Well, what we'll do is tell them we'll make it a monster show but secretly make it an outer limits, scientific show.' We had to do that because the network was very set in its ways."

Series consultant and original OUTER LIMITS producer Joseph Stefano said he doesn't

Screenwriter Alan Brennert, who wrote four scripts for the new series, praised the new show for giving writers less restrictions.



quite agree with this. "I thought we had a very wide variety of stories even when we did have a 'bear'. Because, the 'bear' at some point, isn't necessarily a monster. In my series bible, the 'Canons of OUTER LIMITS' I didn't necessarily say a 'bear' has to be a monster. It's 'a staggering, shuddering effect that induces awe or wonder,' and that did not have to be a monster. As it turned out, the [ABC] network was very clearly in favor of using some kind of creature."

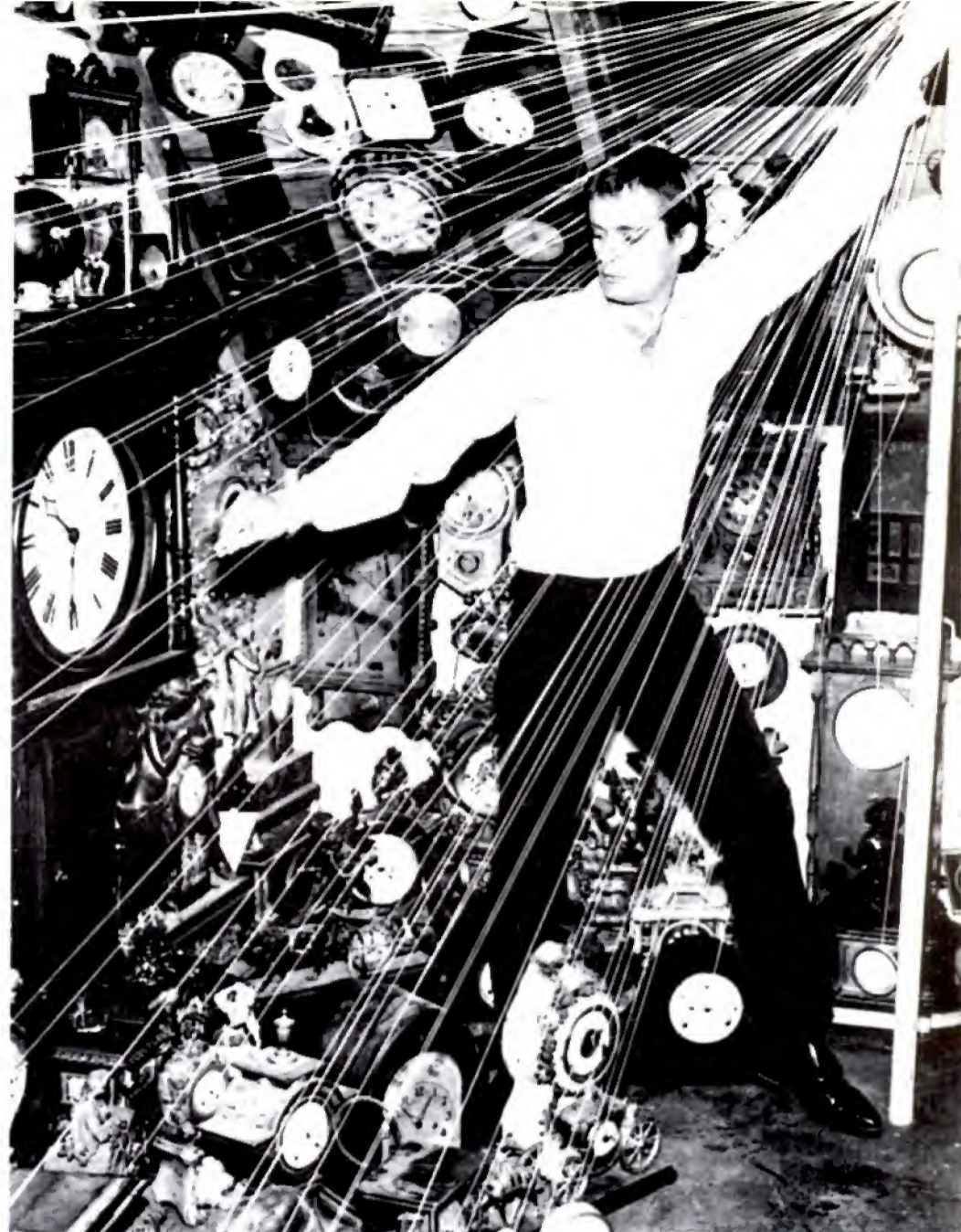
Alan Brennert said he's grateful for the absence of an edict for monsters in OUTER LIMITS stories. "I don't like rules. I don't like someone saying to me, 'Here is the format that you have to adhere to.' There's enough of that in television already. In regular episodic television there are...formats that are strictly observed. There are X number of characters, they all have to have a certain amount of stories that you have to follow.

"The great thing about anthology series is there are no rules! You can destroy the universe in one week and recreate it in another week. You don't have to have a conventional, sympathetic likable hero. He can have flaws! He could be a bastard! He or she can be anything you want them to be.

"I think when you start saying, 'You have to have this or that every week,' you make an anthology show much more like episodic television. That's the great thing I loved the most about the original TWILIGHT ZONE. You never knew what was coming; one week was a fantasy and the next week was horror. You never knew what to expect. It was flexible enough to contain a multitude of themes and genres. The original OUTER LIMITS I enjoyed a great deal, but it was a little more restrictive because of the monsters. I really didn't mind that as a viewer, but as a writer, I don't like being boxed-in with requirements." Director Paul Lynch actually sat down with some of the original series videos for a refresher course prior to beginning his episode, "Second



Martin Landau as Andro, "The Man Who Was Never Born," landing on Earth from a devastated future in the classic first season show telecast 10/28/63.



David McCallum as the time traveller in "Forms of Things Unknown," Joseph Stefano's 1964 pilot for a new series, THE UNKNOWN, which ABC didn't buy.

Soul," and the results surprised him. "I think [the new series] pretty well holds the spirit of the original series quite true, except much better production quality. The original series now is pretty cheesy. Monster makeup and all of those things, if you go back and look, were pretty amateur the way they did the makeup. They were inventive and good at the time they made them, but technology now has improved so much and the creatures and everything else [are] so much better, I think. Certainly, of the shows I did."

Another interesting elemental contrast between the two shows is the "fright" factor. Is the new show as frightening as the original? "What is scary now isn't necessarily what was scary in 1963," noted new series producer Brad Wright. "You put a man in a bug suit, and he walks into the room swaying, that might be pretty terrifying in 1963. Now, the audiences are too sophisticated so you have to get to fear in a different way."

To determine how to frighten the OUTER LIMITS audience,

noted former co-executive producer Michael Cassutt, "We have to examine what makes us shiver today. What are the real problems in the 1990s?" Cassutt asked. "Space stories were a very fertile area for storytelling in the early 1950s, [but] space stories are not the fertile area, especially in scary science fiction, for the 1990s. It's a lot more about biology. Things like that. AIDS is a bigger threat than finding an alien on the moon, frankly. It's scarier now. And that's what we saw. We get a lot of stories about robots, and biological themes. Where are the stories about aliens and spaceships? Everyone's nightmare now [is] about sexually transmitted diseases or terrorism, not the nuclear war of the 1960s. That's another reason the show looks different. It couldn't help but be different from the '60s."

For directorial insights into what makes a show scary, Mark Sobel suggested a theory. "I think what made the original show scary, and this may sound weird, was the black and white," said Sobel, who directed

"Caught in the Act." Noted Sobel, "I think there is something inherent in black and white that is infinitely scarier. I think it creates a whole different world. The *cinema noir* is in black and white. We're unfortunately now shooting in a commercial world where you just can't market black and white [product]. I would love to do a special black and white episode. That would be cool. There's something to be said about that. Although at the same time, certainly in terms of the two shows I did, they were meant to be less scary than fantastic. The shows I did were more into the fantastic rather than being pure horror."

On the subject of the effectiveness of the original show's black and white photography, Joseph Stefano noted, "I've heard that theory. The black and white concept, as being scarier, works more in memory."

"I don't think this [new series] is as scary. We had a different approach to scaring people. I think the scariness of the original OUTER LIMITS is more long-lasting. I'm not sure

an audience can be scared that way any more."

Aside from the SF, the horror, the infamous bears, an element that fans revel over as giving THE OUTER LIMITS a distinct signature is the so-called gothic element. Gothic, as seen in LIMITS, doesn't refer to Western Europe architecture, but to a dark, claustrophobic mood on film consisting of shadows, weird camera angles and special effects. The emphasis is atmosphere over characters or plot progress. The late gothic SF author H.P. Lovecraft is the acknowledged progenitor of this stylistic form of storytelling.

Gothic, as a combination of emotional and photographic qualities, was a unique stamp of the series producer, Joseph Stefano and photographer Conrad Hall.

Fan favorite episodes of the original series that are considered gothic include "The Form of Things Unknown" with David McCallum, "The Bellerophon Shield" with Martin Landau, and "It Crawled Out of the Woodwork."



Classic shows: Janet DeGore (top) and Simon Oakland as the Empyrian in "Second Chance." Below: Harry Guardino in "The Human Factor."



"My take on the original OUTER LIMITS was they were science fiction stories that were scary, weird and gothic," said Alan Brennert. "The new OUTER LIMITS is very much the same thing. There are science fiction stories but they have to have some sort of scary, creepy, suspenseful element in them. That's really the only format guidelines restriction I've ever received in writing these new shows.

"For me, the essential difference between the original and the new [OUTER LIMITS] is that, I found the original had a more gothic feel to it, because they had Conrad Hall, who really knew black and white photography, which gave every frame a *noir* feel. Later, upon that, you had Joe Stefano's

gothic sensibilities and takes on science fiction. That's something I don't think anyone has really done, certainly, not in television before. They took the elements, the props, the concepts of science fiction, but they cast them in a gothic/horror role. That's what's neat about them.

"There were two episodes I loved as a kid. One was 'Don't Open Till Doomsday,' about people trapped in a [box], and 'The Guests.' Those two episodes, specifically, were the inspiration for my [new OUTER LIMITS] episode, 'The Refuge.' When I came up with the idea for 'The Refuge,' I wanted to do something that felt very much like an old OUTER LIMITS. I loved the bizarre, colorful characters trapped in a gothic mansion. I don't think it came off as I intended, but it was what I was setting out to do.

"The original show had a much more gothic feel to it, but the new version pretty much jettisons all the gothic trappings of the original show. But it still tries to maintain a balance of SF and horror as the original show did. I think, by and large, they've succeeded in that."

Jonathan Glassner, co-executive producer of the new series, doesn't like the gothic approach. "The problem with gothic horror is that it's dated," he said. "No matter how you do traditional gothic horror, if you try to set it today, it feels dated."

However, immediately after making this statement, Glassner praised Brennert for his achievement. "With 'The Refuge,' I think Alan brilliantly pulled it off because he was able to have a modern science fiction exploration for a gothic horror story, which is quite a challenge to do!"

Stefano says that he disagrees with any discussion that a gothic element might be dated for the new series. "I think the gothic element is apparent in all deep, emotional, scary thrillers and movies. It's there. I don't think there's any way of saying it's dated. We're talking about a literary style that is called gothic."

Having tried it himself in "The Refuge," Brennert said

“The new OUTER LIMITS does something no one’s done in TV. They took the elements, props and concepts of sci-fi, but cast them in a gothic/horror role.”

—Alan Brennert, writer—

he would like to see more of this aspect of the show in the new series. "But it's clearly not required for the success of the show," he noted. "The producers of the new LIMITS have found a blending of gothic and sci-fi that works for the 1990s that people are responding to. The gothic element is a signature of the original show, but is not a crucial element."

One of the greatest challenges that faced the producers of the new series was to somehow live up to the fan's memories of the show with a modern, visually arresting title, a memorable music theme and a clear, authoritative Control Voice.

Taking control of your television set was pretty easy 30 years ago, but to do that in today's environment of a thousand channels is a lot harder. In fact, THE OUTER LIMITS could have been drowned out by all those other signals vying for the unsuspecting television viewer's attention.

For help, Trilogy Entertainment brought together the unique talents of five individu-

Composer John Van Tongeren, who scored the new OUTER LIMITS, provided the more modern sound the producers wanted.



als to collaborate and recreate a memorable OUTER LIMITS main title that would capture the attention of—and set a suspenseful tone of the series—for a 1990s television audience.

Executive producer Richard Lewis and MGM-TV president John Symes rolled up their sleeves and went to work on developing the concept. The first step in selling THE OUTER LIMITS to a new audience, noted titles designer Donald Beck, began not with

a main title but with a sales presentation videotape that he developed to help "sell" the property to various participating parties such as Showtime and the syndication market.

"We used the old OUTER LIMITS as the jumping off point for the new OUTER LIMITS, in terms of the kinds of stories told and the style to be told," explained Beck. "To be as close to the original as possible, but now of course, updated 30 years later. We had footage from the original series, which we used to sell the new show. "When the [new series] became a reality, Richard Lewis and John Symes called me in, and together, Richard and I conceptualized the main title."

"We were very concerned that the series is introduced in a way each week [that] is fresh. We worked very hard to create that title sequence."

The original series, noted Beck, was not forgotten in the creative process. "The homage of the original is in the words and the feeling of the main title."

There is one other subtle reference to the original series implanted by Beck in the titles. Unless you are an OUTER LIMITS hardcore fan, you won't catch the nod. In the syndication broadcasts, when the show goes to commercials, there's a two or three second OUTER LIMITS 'bumper' consisting of a snippet of the main title and Kevin Conway's control voice announcing, 'The Outer Limits...Please Stand By...' Trivia buffs, take note, PLEASE STAND BY was the original title of the series in 1963. More accurately, it was the original title of the first episode with actor Cliff

Robertson which later became 'The Galaxy Being.' The ABC network balked at the title because they were worried that audiences would equate the words 'Please stand by' as a prelude to an televised emergency broadcast. This was, of course, just a year after the Cuban Missile Crisis.

"I knew that story, I don't think anyone else did," grinned Donald Beck. "We are always trying to subtly use the original series as the basis of whatever we were doing for this series. I was the one who did those little bumpers ... that was sort of an inside joke."

The second and third to join the team were composers John Van Tongeren and Mark Mancina. Individually or as a team, Mancina and Van Tongeren have been making movie music for major feature films for many years. Mancina's name is stamped on blockbuster hits TWISTER and SPEED.

While Beck worked on the visual aspect of the main titles, simultaneously, the music was being conceptualized as well. But, as composer John Van Tongeren explained, his entrance into the OUTER LIMITS was not immediate. He became involved in THE OUTER LIMITS in a rather roundabout way.

Fellow composer Howard Shore [ED WOOD] was originally commissioned to write a new theme for the series. But after listening to the results, the producers decided they wanted to go in a different direction.

"I heard Howard's main title. It was very good," remarked Van Tongeren. "I actually looked at it a couple of days. They wanted me to see if I could add something to it. This was extremely difficult. It's something you don't like to do. He did a tipping of the hat of the old style sound with an orchestra. Ultimately, the producers at MGM felt they needed a more modern sound. It wasn't what they wanted and it didn't seem to go right with the visuals."

So, the producers turned to an old colleague, Mark Mancina, who had worked with them in

1993, in their first television series effort, SPACE RANGERS. But there was another snag. Mancina couldn't commit to the series, so he recommended his friend and colleague, Van Tongeren. Trilogy already knew him from three episodes of SPACE RANGERS and selected cues of LIFEPOD, Trilogy's 1993 Movie of the Week. Together, Van Tongeren and Mancina composed the series main title theme and the directive was for them to invent something new.

Van Tongeren and Mancina's theme was inspired by the title's being designed by Beck, and vice versa. Noted Van Tongeren, "When Don's visuals started taking shape and we were looking at them, they got the visuals going and put my music up against it. It became the basis of the theme."



Charles Schneeman's promotional painting for ABC's premiere of "The Galaxy Being," the original series' pilot telecast 9/16/63. The series was originally to be titled PLEASE STAND BY, wording which features as a homage in the new show's title sequence.

Van Tongeren explained that although the core of the composition was conjured without visuals, once the elements (including the narration) were married together, additional refinements resulted in the final theme used for every episode of the series. "If I had my choice...I'd love to sit there and say the music is the main deal," said Van Tongeren. "But it really isn't. It's a combination of visuals and the music to become one idea."

The last person to join the project, and unveiled here for the first time, was actor Kevin Conway, who provided the memorable, haunting opening narration that has become synonymous with the show.

All elements considered, there is one last item that has actually been omitted in the translation from the original to

the new series when it comes to the main titles and narration. In the original series, at the end of each drama, the Control Voice kicked in to remind viewers that the television set was being 'controlled.' "We now return the television set to you, until next week when the Control Voice will once again ..."

This finale narration is not present in the new series and series creator Pen Densham reluctantly admitted, "I guess we never really thought about it being necessary. We felt the Control Voice summing up the show was a very important thing," but having the Control Voice return the television set back to the viewer was "just something we never discussed."

Summing up the experience, Donald Beck noted, "I was very thrilled to work on the resurrection of the updated version. I thought it was one of the best main titles I've ever done. It's unique, visually stunning. Every time I see it, I see something different."

Joseph Stefano remarked, "I think they were very good. I don't think they were as good as the original show. There was a simplicity to the original titles that I think was more beguiling. But, that may be

hindsight. That may be because I know people's reactions to the show, over the years, through the decades. I don't know the same thing about the new series. These titles may have some special quality to them that we won't know for ten years.

"They've taken advantage of some of the things they can do. They've elaborated, they've kind of gotten away from taking control of your television set. That was what everyone had to say about THE OUTER LIMITS—this thing should come on and they take control of your television set. I don't see this as strongly on this one."

Stefano's colleague, Leslie Stevens also opined, "They do well but I think they sort of went too far with it. They over-designed it, but I think the idea is being maintained." □

Wymer (William B. Davis).

As a kid, didn't you ever want to float around, and listen in on people's conversations without them knowing you were there? To hear what they really think of you? Once again, *THE OUTER LIMITS* takes the familiar faces of well known actors, in this case comedienne Peri Gilpin and Joely Fisher, and places them in unusual circumstances. Both actresses provide above-average performances. With Crocker's very interesting premise and the strength of Azzopardi's direction, "Out of Body" makes it easy to forgive the producers for so many "scientists-wreaking-havoc-with-their-latest-experiments" stories. The only concerns regarding this tale is "Did Rebecca ever develop a procedure of returning the spirit form back to the physical body? How could they develop the research to this degree and not consider the consequences?" Also, it's weird to see William B. Davis here, playing as he does on *THE X-FILES*, the quiet, sinister antagonist standing in the background.

"I thought it was really good performances from two actresses who were known for *ELLEN* and *FRASIER*, who always played straight characters on those shows," said Richard Lewis. "Here, they get to really stretch their dramatic wings. This is really a platonic love story between two women. I thought it was pretty powerful. It's *POLTERGEIST* meets *OUTER LIMITS*."



Jon Cryer plays a '40s man whose auto accident sends him hurtling into the future at ten year intervals in the fish out of water "Vanishing Act."

"1959? It can't be...i-it's not possible! It's not possible that I could be gone that long...and not remember any of it!"

—Trevor McPhee to his wife Theresa

"Something is causing this! Something is responsible for these blackouts I've been having! Every time I have one, I-I bounce ahead in time!"

—Trevor McPhee to a skeptical Dr. Golden

"So where do you go? What wondrous things have you seen? That's the missing piece of the puzzle."

—Ray Carter on tape, speaking to Trevor McPhee

VANISHING ACT

★★★ 1/2

#42, 7/21/96. Story by Jonathan Walker. Teleplay by Chris Dickie. Directed by Jonathan Glassner.

A young man in the 1940s, Trevor McPhee (Jon Cryer) gets into an automobile accident, but when he wakes up, he is startled to discover 10 years has passed and he hasn't aged at all. He returns to his home and sees his wife, Theresa McPhee (Jessica Lundy), who doesn't believe his story. But later, when McPhee jumps forward again, he discovers himself in the 1960s in the midst of the war protest movement. By this time, his wife has remarried and starts to believe his story. At each occurrence of a time jump, the McPhees meet together and try to understand what's happening and what it all



Preacher David Longworth bestows invincible powers in third season's "Heart's Desire," a science fiction western.

Richard Lewis said that the decision to film in Vancouver "was a double-edged sword. The advantages are financial. You get more bang for your buck. The quality of the crew is very solid. The locations you get are pretty substantial. You get an otherworldly feel in Vancouver. Those are all the pros. The downside, frankly, is we're making a television show in another country."

Canadian producer Justis Greene came aboard to shepherd a skilled and experienced Canadian production crew. Cassutt was optimistic that *OUTER LIMITS* was off to a good start. "But it was very difficult because of the number of people involved and the distance from everyone's home," said Cassutt. "You had the Trilogy producers who had their own vision of what should be done. One [producer] had one vision and the other had another. There was sort of a tug of war there, [and] MGM had its needs. Everyone had their needs and you're on your own."

Cassutt's increasing restlessness had nothing to do with the city of Vancouver. He was anxious because of the sheer distance and detachment from the creative decision-making process. "The problems inherent in an Vancouver-based production (with writers in L.A.) apply to any 'remote' series production," said Cassutt. "I certainly enjoyed Vancouver. It's one of my favorite places to visit. I really lost the ability to deal with Jonathan and Manny [who were in Los Angeles]. They were dealing with Trilogy

“It's hard enough to find people who can write science-fiction television, then to start saying 'we have to find more Canadians'...made it almost intolerable.”

—Exec. Prod. Michael Cassutt—

directly and Mark Stern with us in Vancouver. This is ... in essence, mounting a production with a fax machine. It was just a very complicated thing to do and ultimately, after having gone through the first three episodes, it was time for me to either commit to the rest of it or get out! I wanted to get out."

The realities of filming a television series in a different country began to set in for Cassutt. "I live in Los Angeles," he explains. "I have

small children in school. There was no way I was going to uproot them for a six episode or eight episode project. It's difficult to move to Vancouver. So, I was going to have to see how it would work with my personal life, being in Vancouver and coming home on weekends. And how could I manage my end of the show from there. "The ideal way to produce a TV show is to have all the relevant writers and producers across the street from the soundstages.

"I just didn't enjoy the environment. I was working way too hard. I saw that I was going to put myself into an early grave, I was not happy that I was separated from my family to the extent that I was." When his six-episode commitment ran out by October 1994, Cassutt jumped back into his car and returned to Los Angeles while Glassner and Coto flew to Vancouver and took over the production.

During his time on the show, Cassutt recalled grappling with "Canadian Content"

Mario Azzopardi directs Esal Morales (c) and stunt double in "Heart's Desire," filmed on the vacant sets of *BORDERTOWN*.



OUTER LIMITS

PRODUCING SF

Brad Wright, on the lookout to do something never seen before.

By Frank Garcia

Identifying what is an appropriate story for the OUTER LIMITS is a very simple process for co-executive producer Brad Wright. "I always know what's a good OUTER LIMITS idea here," pointing to his chest, "before I know it here," pointing to his forehead. "It's an emotional response to a story, more than anything else. If an idea's pitched to us, and I go, 'That's cool!' then I just know in my heart that it's going to be something that's fun and engaging, especially when it's something that we've never seen before in television."

With a high aim to create groundbreaking stories and presenting fresh ideas, Wright does explain however, that ironing out details can sometimes be challenging. "We try and avoid the scientist in the lab coat, but sometimes we go *waaaaay* out of our way to avoid the obvious and sometimes it just makes sense to have a story with that person or that character."

"What I'm proud of most, and what I think we've done most, is not fallen into a rut of, 'Oh, another time-travel story' or 'Oh, another human turning into an alien story.' We're really trying for broad spectrum science fiction [while] trying hard to avoid repetition."

Although Wright's freelance script for first season's "Blood Brothers" was heavily re-written, Trilogy producer Richard Lewis invited Wright back to do "The Message," a tale written especially for actress Marlee Matlin, who wanted to be in the show. "It began with a simple notion," explained Wright. "What if someone deaf is hearing something that nobody else can hear. The only thing that changed from the story is the ending, which disappointed me."



Larry Drake and Marlee Matlin in Wright's first season episode "The Message," tailor-written for Matlin, the story of a deaf woman whose hearing aid picks up extraterrestrial voices.

In the show, Matlin plays a deaf education teacher, Jennifer Winter, whose experimental implant broadcasts baffling messages which, when written down, are recognized as binary code. With the help of her janitor (L.A. LAW's Larry Drake), a NASA astrophysicist on the skids due to mental illness, the code is revealed to be from an alien ship—the plans for a super laser—that will help them avert disaster. Building and implementing the device, they catch a brief glimpse of the alien spacecraft, a light-sail, before it recedes into the dark depths of space.

Wright said he wished for a more poetic ending. "There was another ending I wrote where she doesn't build the laser. They fear they're going to see the aliens going to their deaths, but [the sky lights up], lasers go firing. From all around the world. She wasn't the only one who heard," and many others

means...

"Vanishing Act" is a refreshingly different time travel story that allows the storytellers to quickly peek at the history of the last 50 years in a very compressed fashion. It's a Coles Notes history lesson for anyone who doesn't remember beyond 15 or 20 years before they were born. Both Jon Cryer and Jessica Lundy provide fine performances and at times, because of Trevor's bewilderment at his time displacement, scenes are funny. And this is rare, for an OUTER LIMITS. Lundy's performance, in particular is worthy to note, because she plays the same character throughout the story—but aging.

"If you had to look at one thing from each decade, what would jump out at you?" asked scripter Chris Dickie. "In the 1960s, it's rock and roll, war and civil rights. If it's the 1970s, it is a generation of urban centres, the money and cocaine culture. The Studio 54-type culture."

"It's very difficult for the audience if you're too subtle. You have to be able to see that change right away. They have to be able to look at it and see how alien it must seem to someone who just arrives there going 10 years, 20 years, 30 years out of synch, and suddenly, this is the world."

"It's a little bit of AN AFFAIR TO REMEMBER meets OUTER LIMITS," said Richard Lewis. "It's a real tragedy that this man who loves this woman keeps getting bounced around. He's losing 10 years of his life with a drop of a hat and no one believes him. I thought it was very riveting and powerful. Glassner directed that one too and did a great job."



David Hyde Pierce as a scientist imprisoned for malpractice in developing a means of virtual reality incarceration in "The Sentence."

"The program assumes guilt. All my work has been based on that assumption."

—Dr. Jack Henson

"While these people are paying their debts to society, society is falling further into debt. With SBR, repeat offenders of violent crimes will become virtually nonexistent."

—Dr. Jack Henson to Senator Meade

THE SENTENCE

★★★

#43, 8/04/96. Written by Melissa Rosenberg. Directed by Joseph L. Scanlan.

Electronics scientist, Dr. Jack Henson (David Hyde Pierce) and his assistant Dr. Dana Elwin (Andrea Roth) demonstrate a revolutionary machine to senators Meade and Walston (Garwin Sanford and Jan D'Arcy) as the solution to the many problems of the prison system. For a short period of time, strapped to a chair and electronically connected to an elaborate computer system, a convicted criminal can live out his sentence inside his mind for what seems, to him, a lifetime. But when a criminal is brought in for a "trial" sentence, and something goes wrong, Henson has to actually catch up with the criminal in the virtual environment in order to save his life. But, after

removing the criminal from his virtual prison, the man dies as a result of the shock of his experience. Shocked at what the machine has done, the senators shut down the project, and after a trial, Henson is sent to prison for the death he has caused.

Despite the similarities to "Mind Over Matter" and "Virtual Future" (scientists presenting a revolutionary invention, and oh, something goes wrong!) "The Sentence" is a very interesting and intense story with a convincing performance by Pierce. There's only one problem with the story, and there's nothing much that Rosenberg can do about it, but the secret of the adventure is instantly recognizable as soon as it appears. Otherwise, enjoy the ride and consider the very real problems of today's prison system.

"It's also a little bit of 'Afterlife,'" said Richard Lewis. "The parable there is take what you do seriously and take precautions. Don't be cavalier because what you create, as smart as you think you are, you may not be able to control. That is, to some degree, what happens in that story. Some really fun stuff for the audience."

THIRD SEASON

"Dear Journal. I've just made a visual survey of the ground above me. There's nothing. The atmosphere is still unbreathable. The surface remains a wasteland devoid of any creature ... perhaps it's time to admit ... I may be the last person on Earth."

—Aidan Hunter to Emma

BITS OF LOVE

★★ 1/2

#44, 1/19/97. Written by James Crocker. Directed by Neill Fearnley.

Aidan Hunter (Jon Tenney) lives in the deep underground after a nuclear holocaust and lives out an idyllic existence surrounded by holographic representations of his family. Aidan shares his loneliness with the computer's human personification, Emma (Natasha Henstridge), who falls in love with him. And therein lies the problem...

With this intriguing premise, a question from *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION* is finally answered: "What would it be like to live in the ships' holodeck all the time?" It's a show like this one that demonstrates the value of a "bottle" show, and how a story can be told within a contained area of space. If Hunter lived "happily ever after" in his little cubbyhole, there would be no drama. Of course, something has to go wrong... Both Tenney and Henstridge give good performances, but thematically, last year's "Mind over Matter" already covered similar "holographic" territory, and "Valerie 23's" robot-in-love-with-their-creators echoes as well. Also questionable is Hunter's inability to shut down the holograms, a

Surviving underground after a nuclear holocaust, Jon Tenney is alone except for the holographic projections that keep him sane in "Bits of Love."



The survivor of a mission to Venus mutates when he returns to Earth in fourth season's "The Joining," starring C. Thomas Howell and Amanda Tapping, a riff on the classic series' "Cold Hands, Warm Heart."

were also receiving the message and understood and responded appropriately. I thought that would have been beautiful to see all these lights shooting up into the sky. And it would have made much more sense. Very poetic. So she feels the joy of her success and what the story I thought was really about is no one believing her, so she would be vindicated."

But the ending filmed was chosen, said Wright, because there was a strong belief among the filmmakers that Jennifer Winter become a hero. "She had to save the day. But, for me it was silly. I mean, you don't plug in a home laser [of] 110 [volts into a wall socket] and hope to deflect a spaceship! Those complaints kind of fell on deaf ears. I'm proud of the episode almost up to that point. I think that scene where they uncover the drawing of the man and the woman and the alien. That's my favorite scene."

Series executive producer Richard Lewis, however, looked upon this story from a different perspective. "We had a big debate about the ending and I finally prevailed, because I think the point of it is that Marlee's character sees it but no one else does," said Lewis. "The world will never know how close we were to having a communication with another life form. I think [what we filmed] was far more poetic. What's the parable here? Sometimes people are trying to communicate to you and you just don't hear them. And it's too late. That's far more compelling than a bunch of people from around the world all hearing the same thing. What's the point of her being deaf and hearing something that no one else can hear if everyone else can hear it? We did have a lot of debates, and I respectfully disagree with Brad on that."

One of Wright's great strengths as a screenwriter and producer is his ability to design bottle episodes—shows filmed with the goal of saving money—and turn them into riveting, compelling dramas where the viewer forgets that they are watching a bottle show. He succeeds with great flourish in

"Quality of Mercy," "Trial By Fire" and "The Conversion." "I have to admit, I enjoy doing that more than anything else as a writer," grinned Wright. "It's one of the things I enjoy doing most. It's a big challenge and it's a lot of fun."

However, in the final episode for the first season, "Voice of Reason," it is glaringly apparent that the show is pulled together for budgetary reasons. It's a variant of the bottle show: the clips episode. Daniel J. Travanti heads a secret committee investigating evidence of extraterrestrial invasions. The show treats us to clips from "Sandkings," "Caught in the Act," "Birthright," "The Voyage Home," "Corner of the Eye," "If These Walls Could Talk," and "The New Breed."

But, as Brad Wright explained, the trick to writing a successful clips episode to save dollars is in the construction of the story. "To try and save money in a series, you shoot for three days [instead of the normal seven days]. It's very common. It's very, very difficult to do it in an anthology because what's your thread? The original notion was a report to the President—directly to the President. We decided to be more conspiratorial by having it not [be] the President but this committee."

Wright revealed that in the original effort, there was more original story than what we finally saw. He noted that the clips took over and less of the committee material was used.

"I prefer bottle shows, personally, which is what 'Voice of Reason' is," says Wright. "We did shoot 30-some odd pages in three days. Neill Fearnley did an amazing job of getting that done. I'm very proud of it, [but] I wish we didn't have to do clips shows."

But Wright is obviously enjoying his stint on the show as writer/producer. He said from the heart, "To be a Canadian writer, who's always loved science fiction, to be able to write for a show I would be an avid fan of—whether I wrote for it or not—is a dream come true." □

requirements set by the Canadian federal government. Richard Lewis explained that "Canadian content rules require that if a script is written by an American, or a non-Canadian, everyone else, the director, the second highest paid actor has to be Canadian. And that gets into some problems. But you know, we've learned to work around it. That does hurt us a little bit."

Noted Cassutt, "It's hard enough to find people who can write television and science fiction television, then to start saying, 'We have to find a lot more Canadians, specifically', made it almost intolerable."

Using the TV screenwriting talent pool of the United States, if there [were] probably 10 writers from the U.S. who could write for the show, considering the population of Canada, the law of averages might say there were probably two in Canada, said Cassutt. "There [were] a lot of good Canadian directors, so we wound up with a pattern that the director was Canadian and the writer was American. A couple of cases, what we tried to do, was take the short stories we'd love to see turned into scripts, and give them to Canadian writers. 'Here's a story we like. What can you do with it?' I don't think it ever quite worked. It worked on a couple of cases but it never worked on the time scale I needed when I was there. Because the problem is you're trying to write someone else's story, without having the affection, love or interest in that story. I would have been better off doing it myself."

"I understand why it was there, but it's crippling. You start an entire series in the beginning of May and you start shooting in the middle of August [1994]. If you had a year to do it, you could nurture some people and bring some people along, and conduct a more thorough search. That's less of a problem but trying to get a mix 'n' match and try and juggle people around, and talk to people who are living in Calgary...who's work you would otherwise not spend a lot of time on. It's a lot of chasing around for very little return."

Richard Lewis summarized the effect Canadian content had on the show: "On the

“I felt like I was handed my fantasy! God! I was a little kid sitting on the couch watching OUTER LIMITS, and suddenly here I am launching it again!”

—Director Mark Sobel—



William Sadler and Sophia Shinas as sex android "Valerie 23," in the first season show written by Jonathan Glassner.

crew side, I've had no problems. As a producer, I've found the Vancouver crews to be on the same level as New York or Chicago. On the acting and directing side, there are some limitations. You're working in a town that's probably less than a million in Vancouver. That's where you're pulling a large number of your cast from. It's not a big talent pool."

For all his complaints, however, Cassutt is pleased with the show's growth and success subsequent to his departure. "Ultimately, it's worked out very well. One of the writers we found very early is now one of the co-executive producers, and that's Brad Wright. He's a terrific writer, he's done some of the best work on the series. Brad's sample work was very good, and he immediately proved that he was a thorough professional—fast, disciplined, responsive. He also seemed to like science fiction, which was great."

Alan Brennert remarked of his friend. "Michael Cassutt is one of the foundations on which this show was built," said Brennert. "He developed some of the best stories for the show, plotted them out and rewrote them in many instances, and provided a very good environment for writers like me, to do their best work for the show. I cannot stress strongly enough how important I think Michael was to the show. He got it off the ground to a really good, solid, flying start. He's a good producer and he intimately knows the genre. He set up the first 17 or 18 shows. When he started they didn't have anything. They had a bible by Pen Densham but no outlines or scripts. Michael set the tone for the first season."

John Symes agreed. Finding the appropriate creative personnel to work on the show was the first step to a successful product. "We're lucky to find those people who have that great affection for the show and the genre. It's those kinds of people that you really need to go out and find. You have to inherently love this form in order to be able to deliver top quality material."

During Cassutt's brief stint in THE

continued on page 86

contrivance that isn't too credible, but perhaps it's because the life support systems are tied in with the interface...

Sam Egan, THE OUTER LIMITS' newest co-executive producer, commented on Fearnley's direction in this season opener. "I thought Neill did an extraordinary job. The entire episode takes place on one set which is a challenge for any director to keep it visually interesting. He was able to create both a sense of claustrophobia which is indigenous to the story, but at the same time, create enough visual interest so the viewer only felt penned in when the storytelling required it. I think that was the most remarkable thing that Neill pulled off."

"It's a very emotional episode. As a rule, for anyone who's watching OUTER LIMITS, episodes that are most successful are when you combine the high concept premise, or what I call the 'gee whiz' factor, with a good human, emotional story."

Of the painting sequence in the episode where Aidan commands Emma to stay frozen while he renders her image onto a canvas, Egan said, "That presented some technological challenges for us, to create the illusion of a 3-D 'still' of her in which Jon Tenney would be able to move around and through that 'still.' When he says, 'Don't move,' she doesn't move her hair, everything's frozen in place."



John Gilbert is a brilliant but dying scientist who devises a machine to transfer his mind into the body of a retarded man in "Second Thoughts."

"Watch how I put on the machine. When I'm done, you put it on, then press the green button. Remember, Karl, no matter what happens to me, no matter how bad it looks, you've got to put on the machine and press the green button!"

—Dr. Valerian to Karl

SECOND THOUGHTS

★★★★

#45, 1/19/97. Written by Sam Egan. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

A brilliant, but dying scientist, Dr. Valerian (John Gilbert) successfully uses a compact, revolutionary machine he invented to transfer his mind into Karl (Howie Mandel), a retarded man. However, unexpected events forces Karl/Valerian to use the machine to absorb three additional minds—a fellow scientist, a detective and a poet—with shattering personal consequences for Karl.

This episode should be required viewing for anyone in universities studying the psychological effects of multiple personalities. Only in science fiction can we explore how "literal" schizophrenia may affect an individual. High marks go to actor Howie Mandel. His *tour de force* performance is enhanced by Mario Azzopardi's direction and the steadicam camerawork, particularly during moments when Karl struggles to contain the cacophony of voices that screams within his mind. The sub-plot, when Karl tries to express his love for his teacher Rose (Jennifer Rubin), nicely dovetails the main plot, where Dr. Valerian's experiment spins out of control. And then, there's yet another, final haunting image...

"Of all the episodes I was intimately involved

with, this one I was most proud of," said scripter Sam Egan. "I was particularly overwhelmed and pleased by Howie Mandel's performance. He put his all into it. All of us here are really pleased with the results."

As for why Karl needed to continually absorb minds by using the machine, Egan explained that "in each case, there was a different rationale for the different personalities that he subsumed. In the case of the cop, the darker side of his personality [came out] and said, 'Always know your enemy.' By getting ahold of the cop's mind, he could stay one step ahead of the police investigation, because he realized they were onto him. This way, he would know exactly how much the police knew."

Vancouver actor Jerry Wasserman, who played William Talbot, Dr. Valerian's scientist colleague whose mind is the second to be absorbed into Karl's brain, fondly recalled working on this segment of the OUTER LIMITS. "It's always exciting for an actor, especially one like me who comes to television from the theater, to get involved of a script that has some literary merit, some style to it," said Wasserman who also appeared in first season's "White Light Fever." "There was some very interesting camera work in there. I was also very delighted by Howie Mandel whom I only really knew as a standup comic. I thought he was a sensational dramatic actor. I was surprised and awed by his dramatic abilities."



Kim Cattrall plays a grief-stricken mom who decides to give birth to a clone of her son who has been killed in an accident in regeneration.

"Dr. Cole has taken a handful of nerve cells and turned them into a living embryo. That's never been done before. You realize how lucky we are?"

"Lucky? How can you say that? Our son is dead."

—Conversation between Graham Highfield and his wife, Rebecca

REGENERATION

★★★

#46, 1/24/97. Written by Tom J. Astle. Directed by Brenton Spencer.

When Rebecca Highfield (Kim Cattrall) dashes into a hospital ward, she learns that their son Justin has died from an accident. Rebecca's grief is complicated when her husband Graham (Daniel Benzali) explains to her that a bioengineering breakthrough will allow her to give birth to an embryonic clone of her son. Later, while pregnant with the fetus of the child, Rebecca begins to have memory flashes provided by her dead son's nerve cells. As the growth continues, the fetus begins to control Rebecca's emotions and actions in a way that frightens Graham.

In yet another intriguing genetic bioengineering episode, coming on the heels of the cloning of a sheep named Dolly, we have this story where Cattrall and Benzali both give very strong performances. In fact, Daniel plays the role so sympathetically that when the character

OUTER LIMITS

CONTROL VOICE

The secret is out: Kevin Conway is the man behind the voice.

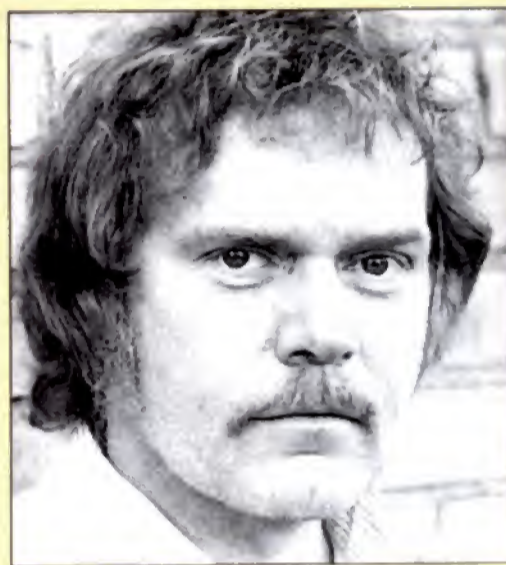
By Frank Garcia

Until now, THE OUTER LIMITS' control voice Kevin Conway was all but invisible. Conway lurked inside the recording studios and in front of a microphone uncredited, unrecognized for his work, narrating in every episode of the new series.

"[The producers] wanted to keep the voice a secret, at least, for the first season or so," explained Conway. "They didn't want people to have a face to the voice. I understood that. I thought that was a good idea. When the show was first launched, they wanted it to be unique and didn't want anyone saying, 'Oh, Joe Blow does the narration...' They kept a low profile."

Conway, an actor of Irish stock from New York, is well-known for his Broadway performances in THE ELEPHANT MAN. Fans of the genre will recognize Conway from some prominent television roles. He was the Klingon Kahless from STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION's sixth season episode "Rightful Heir." In fact, Conway recently narrated an audio book adaptation of *Kahless*, Michael Jan Friedman's hardcover novel from Pocket Books. Conway was also Dr. Haber in the 1980 PBS television film adaptation of Ursula K. Le Guin's classic novel, THE LATHE OF HEAVEN. In that film, Conway co-starred with THE OUTER LIMITS' "White Light Fever" lead actor Bruce Davison. His most recent genre role was in the 1996 thriller LAWNMOWER MAN 2: BEYOND CYBERSPACE.

Ironically, the decision to keep Conway faceless mirrored actor Vic Perrin's experience on the original show. Throughout the 1960s, Perrin served as the series narrator



Conway, the New York actor whose voice provides the show's hypnotic openings.

of every episode of the classic 1960s series and was never credited for his work. Only years later, before he died in 1989, he became publicly acknowledged as the Control Voice. Vic Perrin was an actor who is well known among SF fans for his roles in STAR TREK's "The Changeling" as the voice of Nomad and in "Mirror, Mirror" as the alien leader Tharn.

Conway himself was unaware of Perrin's

work on the series. Contrasting Perrin's narration style to his own, Conway observed, "It's a slightly different approach. As I remember, [Vic Perrin's] narration [was] much flatter, sort of disembodied. Even some of the writing was almost Shakespearean, at times. There were times the narrator would even say 'We.' 'We' feel this way. Not 'you.' In other words, not 'you' earthlings, but 'we' earthlings. It's almost like he's an alien who lives here amongst humans. A lot of the shows are about moral choices that human beings have to make."

Getting the OUTER LIMITS gig as the Control Voice, noted Conway, was accidental. "I didn't even know, to be honest with you, that THE OUTER LIMITS was ready to be done. I happened to be in Los Angeles. I was doing something there, my agent called me up and said, 'You know, I told the [OUTER LIMITS] casting director that you were in town. She flipped out! Would you be interested in doing a narration?' I said, 'Sure! I'd love to do a narration!' Especially if you're to become identified with a show like that. It's like being part of an on-going series without having to [actually] do the show every week. I went over there and laid down some audition tapes from various



There's nothing wrong with your television set....Conway's voice resonates with the perfect counterpoint to the dazzling title sequence designed by Donald R. Beck from the surreal photography of Jerry Uelsmann.

stuff they had written. Then I went back to New York and then they called and said, 'We want you to do it!' I was back in Los Angeles by that time when we were ready to record. At the time, I was doing *STREETS OF LAREDO*, the mini-series. I was in Texas and I had to go to Los Angeles [to record the narration of] the first seven or eight shows."

With his rich and vibrant voice, this actor and stage director has a parallel career as a narrator of documentaries and corporate videos. "I've done quite a few narrations down through the years," noted Conway. "A lot of things. I did a radio version of the wonderful Robert Henderson play *I Never Sang for my Father*, which was a [1970] film starring Gene Hackman and Melvyn Douglas."

The process of actually recording the opening titles narration for Conway was relatively simple. He would go into a recording studio, with the written passages to recite in hand, and guided by a voice director, Conway would transform his vocal chords into the Control Voice. "We spent a lot of time on that," he said. "They changed it slightly from what was said originally. We spent a lot of time because it was going to be used on every show. I do a slight variation of my own voice with this. It's deeper, it's a little more 'wet' if I can say that. It's just a voice we decided on."

The changes that Conway refers to are in the content of the narration. It was necessary to adjust and acknowledge the passage of 30 years between the two series. Specifically, a section of the introduction was altered. Instead of the now-dated phrase, "We

“The Control Voice is almost a wizard, with an ability of looking into people’s lives. Yet, he’s mortal, too, a commentator on the human condition.”

—Kevin Conway, narrator—

can roll the image; make it flutter. We can change the focus to a soft blur or sharpen it to crystal clarity..." the producers replaced it with, "We can deluge you with a thousand channels or expand one single image to crystal clarity and beyond. We can shape your vision to anything our imagination can conceive..."

Conway noted he received no instructions to emulate Perrin's rendition of the Control Voice. He was encouraged to mold the role for himself. "It's a different show," he said. "Thirty years later. The narration should fit this particular show, the way it's produced, the kind of stories they come up with and the kind of visuals. They're not trying to imitate the way the *OUTER LIMITS* was done in the 1960s so I'm not trying to imitate the way that announcer did it."

In adopting the role, Conway has put some thought into what the Control Voice represents. "My thinking is...that human beings are aliens. In other words, we've come from somewhere else. We were seeded here in some form or another. I think that's very possible. This Control Voice, I think is someone who is, in a way, almost a wizard. He has an ability of looking from above and into people's lives wherever he is. Yet, I think he's mortal. He's a creature that's part human. He also has, maybe, an understanding that we're all part of something else."

"It's philosophical. The shows run the gamut from being funny to tragic. He's a commentator on the human condition and our growth. We're still evolving. What kind of species are we going to be in a 1,000 years?" □

Rebecca (heavily influenced by the extraordinary connection with her unborn child) accuses her husband of having killed their son Justin, as the audience, we don't believe her. And this undermines our identification of her as the heroine.

In the end, if you're confused by how Rebecca manages to escape from being jailed for the murder of her husband, co-executive producer Sam Egan clarifies. "We've actually ran around about that question," admitted Egan. "We have to assume in the interim there was a trial...[and] there were some legal repercussions and she was acquitted. That was a bit of a dramatic ellipsis."

"I was wrong to keep this from you all these years...I was afraid that you'd leave again. I couldn't survive that...I don't know how it happened but we fell in love again. I fell in love with you."

—Frank Martin, to his wife Carol

LAST SUPPER

★★★

#47, 1/31/97 Written by Scott Shepherd. Directed by Helen Shaver.

When his son, Danny (Fred Savage), arrives home with a new-found girlfriend, Jade (Sandrine Holt), Frank Martin (Peter Onorati) experiences a jolting flashback. Twenty years ago, while a guard at a military base, Frank saved a young Asian woman from unusually brutal experiments by a scientist, Dr. Sinclair (Michael Hogan). Jade looks exactly like the woman he knew as Laura. When Jade reveals to Frank that she has lived for several hundred years, and is immortal, he doesn't believe her. A rift develops between the family members when Frank attempts to explain the fantastic truth. Later, the desperate Dr. Sinclair bursts into the home, still desperate to find the woman, placing the entire family in jeopardy.

Despite the domestic "home" environment, this story and its characters are surprisingly effective in emotionally enticing the viewer into the drama. The characters deal with their emotions with a degree of honesty that could so easily ring hollow. There are strong performances by the actors all around. There's also Shaver's interesting artistic decision to see Jade's green eyes during the black and white flashbacks.

"This episode really told a love story on a couple of levels," noted Sam Egan. "It was about a father and a son who were in love with the same woman but in different times of her life."

Egan acknowledged that this story could have been much 'bigger' in a different context, for example, if it sketched different periods of Jade's life. "We wanted to keep the story contained into how Jade affected everyone in this family and how unsettling it was for the father to have this woman come back into his life, knowing what he did. It was operating on a number of different levels, a science fiction level and a human

Doctor Michael Hogan metamorphoses and reverses in age rapidly, under the spell of a centuries-old immortal woman in "Last Supper."



level.”

Discussing Helen Shaver's second turn at directing an episode (after a directorial debut on *POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY*), executive producer Jonathan Glassner said he was delighted. "It's always interesting to have an actor directing actors. She's really good at getting what she wants out of them. She speaks their language. As a director, I enjoyed watching how she works. I'm more of a camera director. I think I learned a lot watching her working with the other actors."



George Newbern and Suki Kaiser shut down the "Stream" in a future when the Internet is fed into the brain, in "Streams of Consciousness."

"The stream gives us instantaneous access to virtually every fact or idea recorded. Ryan simply wants something we all take for granted..."

—Stanley to Mark

"You can't have dreams without challenges."

—Ryan to Cheryl

STREAMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS ★★★

#48, 2/7/97. Written by David Shore. Directed by Joe Nimziki.

In a futureworld, "The Stream" is an advanced Internet that transmits the world's information directly into the brain via an electronic attachment to the person's temples. A young man, Ryan (George Newbern), is a rare individual who's impaired brain cannot access the world's network and is considered handicapped. Ryan's world changes permanently when Stanley, his guardian (Blu Mankuma), develops an electronic virus that kills him. Soon, Ryan comes to believe the problem is a greater one: the "Stream" itself is a potential threat to the world's population who are linked to the "Stream." He must convince Cheryl (Suki Kaiser), the neuropsychologist, that the problem is real and takes it upon himself to seek a solution—the long-forgotten shutdown codes for the Stream.

"Streams" is a whimsical, inventive idea. It's a logical SF extension of what today's Internet has to offer. Characters and acting are interesting throughout, but the novelty of the storyline is marred at its conclusion. If Ryan had successfully shut down the Stream in order to save civilization, wouldn't everyone suffer from disorientation, confusion and sudden inability to function as they normally have been for generations? At the story's conclusion, none of this is transmitted. In fact, it leaps forward to a society that easily recovers. If no one knows how to traditionally read and write, how can society survive?

There's a famous SF short story by E.M. Forster called "The Machine Stops." It's a tale of a dehumanized, mechanized underground society totally dependent upon a gigantic machine for its existence. And one day, when the machine stops, the world crumbles with it. Disconnecting the Stream should liken to this conclusion. It would have been equally interesting to see in greater detail how "Stream's" world recovers. Alas, there's only an hour to do this.

OUTER LIMITS, he made a considerable effort to finding appropriate SF literary properties to adapt for the show. "There are a lot of SF stories in print out there that would make good OUTER LIMITS stories. I knew some of that material quite well. I spent a couple of years as an awards judge for the Science Fiction Writers of America [SFWA] and Nebula awards. There [were] all kinds of stories I wanted to do. I did look long and hard at Algis Budrys' novella *Rogue Moon* as a possible two-hour story. This is a classic SF story about a matter transmitter and a dangerous alien structure on the Moon." In fact, Alan Brennert still wants to do this story for a future episode.

"Other stories I thought about—Michael Shea's 'The Autopsy,' which is about a country doctor performing one on an alien, with horrific results. Mark Stern liked the story, but we both agreed it was just too nasty to film," said Cas-

sutt. "All of these would make good, frightening stories but the trouble was the production was not really set up to negotiate quickly and smoothly. It was tough to make them work. Secondly, it was tough to get the rights to do them. Had there been a year, before filming started, there would have been more time to negotiate those deals and put them into place."

It was not even possible to begin adapting stories until agreements were in place. "Ultimately, we did get a couple of things, we did get 'Inconstant Moon' by Larry Niven, which was a story I wanted to do. Ultimately they did a few, but nowhere near the number you would have got in a perfect universe. Out of 22 episodes, we could have done eight based on previously published stories."

Cassutt arrived and left THE OUTER LIMITS so quickly that his sole script, 'Engines of the Heart,' about nanotechnology, was shelved, unproduced. After OUTER LIMITS, Cassutt went on to be co-executive producer on Fox TV's *STRANGE LUCK*. Just recently, Cassutt completed a season of working on *BEVERLY HILLS 90210* and has just written a script version

“OUTER LIMITS has been so successful... maybe the networks will notice that and we'll start a trend toward anthological type shows...”

—Director Mark Sobel—



Michael Cassutt, co-executive producer of the first six shows, an experienced SF writer who set the tone for the whole series.

ple we work with, most of the time we're dealing with explorative minds. It's someone who wants to take risks in their life. Those kinds of personalities are intriguing people to meet."

By January 1995, Pen Densham had left the U.S. to direct his film *MOLL FLANDERS*. "I had tapes of shows and dailies shipped to me in Ireland for a while when I was prepping *MOLL*. Because when I started shooting in April, I could no longer contribute."

And so the reins of THE OUTER LIMITS were handed off to his partner Richard Lewis. "From the moment we started having scripts—and 'Sandkings' was the first—I took over the leadership on a daily basis," said Lewis. "I read every script, I agree or disagree on every casting made. I look at every [film editing] cut, and give notes on every cut."

Once the production engine roared to life, Lewis and company began to realize there were fundamental differences between being a movie production company

of Clifford Simak's *Way Station*. His novel about the space program, *Missing Man*, was published by Forge Books in August 1998.

Jonathan Glassner and Manny Coto, as co-executive producers, held the fort for several months until summer 1995, when Coto left the series to work on film projects. Later, Scott Shepherd joined the show during the second season. But when he left, Brad Wright filled the co-executive producer void. "I think we were very lucky we got great people at the right time," noted Densham. "Michael Cassutt came to us with a sense of science fiction and a great knowledge of the world and a great enthusiasm for the show. He helped us get it up and running. Jonathan [Glassner] joined us quite early-on and proved not only to be a super writer with 'Valerie 23' but he also did a wonderful job of directing. We suddenly found someone who was capable in both areas and deeply enriched the series. I like the peo-

continued on page 91

OUTER LIMITS

THE LIGHT BRIGADE

Brad Wright explores a dark universe in OL's first sequel.

By Frank Garcia

Half a league half a league
Half a league onward
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred:
'Forward the Light Brigade
Charge for the guns' he said
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred

—the first eight lines of
Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem
"Charge of the Light Brigade,"
April 10, 1864.

This episode, by writer Brad Wright and director Michael Keusch, has the distinction of being the first sequel in the history of THE OUTER LIMITS. Set in the same universe as "Quality of Mercy," "Brigade" catches up with Major John Skokes (Robert Patrick) aboard the ship of the titles—an allusion to Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem, "Charge of the Light Brigade." They're on a suicide mission, carrying a doomsday bomb to the aliens' homeworld.

"The original idea was that everybody liked 'Quality of Mercy.' And somebody said, almost jokingly, 'Why don't you do a sequel?'" remembered Wright. "The Light Brigade" was the last gasp. There was such heroism in that. If there's any inspiration to that story, it's H.M.S. Ulysses by Alistair McLean. It's about a British cruiser [in an] absolutely hopeless mission. They were trying to escort 40 ships. They were losing ships...it was just a hopeless cause. There's a nobility in that, that's kind of foolhardy. For them to embrace the nobility of their mission is foolhardy, which is why...we shouldn't embrace the nobility of war.



Wil Wheaton (STAR TREK's Wesley Crusher) in this second season sequel to "Quality of Mercy." Earth soldiers overcome devastating odds in their war with hostile aliens.

"That was a really, really tough show to pull off in seven days. I think Michael [Keusch] did a great job of directing. I loved Robert Patrick. He was great. He couldn't believe I brought him back. I said, 'Thanks for coming back!' and he said, 'I had to, man! How could I not come back?' He loved playing the character. He loved that we made him an alien.

"Wil Wheaton said the best thing—gave the best compliment—that production designer Steve Geaghan could have got. Wil

Responding to these thoughts regarding the confusing ending, Sam Egan admitted, "We concede there. I understand your point," he said. But what we're supposed to know in the final moments of the episode, is that "it takes a bit of a leap on the viewer's part to get there...people were initially very disoriented and incapable of dealing with it, but then we come to rely on our innate human ability to somehow overcome."

"There would be a lot of chaos," agreed Brad Wright. "I agree with you from a literal sense. But if we suspect that ultimately, if society was released from the control of the Stream would be a good thing, then we can skip to that stage.

"We wanted our hero to actually be a hero and not be the reason for the collapse of civilization. I felt, in this story, that he was such a genuine hero, that he should succeed."

"Without children being born the economics of the world aren't able to plan for jobs in the future."

—Sherry to the schoolchildren

"One child isn't enough to save the human race but you're our first ray of hope in 10 years. And I'm not about to give you up."

—Dr. Clayton Royce to Tim and Sherry McAllister.

DARK RAIN

★★★

#49, 2/14/97 Written by David Braff. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

In the near future, deadly chemical gases developed by the military have condemned the human race to giving birth to deformed children. When a young couple, Tim and Sherry McAllister (Don Franklin and Rachael Crawford), discover they are expecting a child, the government steps in and realizes their child could be the very first healthy baby since the dawn of the 'Dark Rain.' Their doctor, Clayton Royce (Alan Scarfe), is determined to keep the couple and their child. But a renegade underground society has other ideas for the couple.

A potentially squeamish premise is nicely played out dramatically with generally good performances. The 'deformed babies' are off-stage talk except for one quick shot. Again, the strength of the series is in an episode like this one: develop an intriguing sociological premise, and without compromise, deal with the potential consequences down the road, minus the addition of any unnecessary embellishments.

"'Dark Rain' was actually shot last year," noted executive producer Jonathan Glassner. "We needed a scene where we had a nursing ward full of deformed children. How do you do that on a television budget?" So the company built the ward and using state-of-the-art computers, "digitally" multiplied a long row of infant cribs receding into the horizon providing the illusion that there were many more of them.

In the near future, after the "Dark Rain," the human race gives birth only to deformed babies, which are warehoused by the government.



"It's a way to get around our television budgetary constraints."

"98843, I need you. I wish I did not. What happens here must remain secret. If you divulge any part of it, I will order the immediate execution of your child."

—Commandant to prisoner 98843

"I was following my programming..."

—Commandant to prisoner 98843

THE CAMP

★★★

#50, 2/21/97. Written by Brad Wright. Directed by Jonathan Glassner.

In the far future, a small band of struggling humans have been encamped by alien humanoid captors. A woman known only as prisoner 98843 (Harley Jane Kozak), defiantly opposes the camp's Commandant (David Hemblen). But one day he summons her to his office. There, she discovers that their enemy is not human at all but slowly decaying robots. Barred from ever revealing this fact to the rest of the prisoners, at the risk of an execution of a child, 98843 works to repair the robots and quietly tries to find a way to finally gain their long-wanted freedom.

Shades of *THE GREAT ESCAPE* and *SCHINDLER'S LIST*, "The Camp" is clearly a SF treatment of the theme. Here we have a collection of human characters living under total adversity, clinging to optimism for survival. Kozak's performance is strong and if Hemblen looks familiar, it's because he was *CAPTAIN POWER*'s nemesis, Lord Dread from that 1987 syndicated series. Here, Hemblen delivers a similar mechanically evil role that you love to hate. Adding to the tension of this story, is the fact that a young girl is the object of quite a bit of jeopardy in this story! (In the 1960s, Joseph Stefano was not allowed to put children in jeopardy in "A Feasibility Study.")

Special effects figures prominently in this story. In a shot reminiscent of one that appeared in "Valerie 23," we see the Commandant's face as half-human and half-robot, in one continuous pan.

To realize the visuals conjured by Brad Wright's script, "We needed to somehow find a concentration camp," said Glassner. "Where are you going to find a concentration camp in Vancouver? It doesn't even need to be a human camp because it's an alien camp. We needed to find a huge walled-in facility. Couldn't find one. Doesn't exist. We got very lucky. We found a giant oil tank that's been shut down. I'm talking massive! About six stories tall, and as wide. Surrounding it was a retaining wall."

But before the production could get to the facility and set up their location, the company was surprised to discover that "they tore the tank down before we started shooting! But they left the wall

Commandant David Hemblen is revealed to be an android in "The Camp," in a far future when humanity is imprisoned in concentration camps.



said, 'This is way better than the Enterprise!'"

Wheaton's comment reflects highly on the careful, intricate spaceship design created by Wright in collaboration with Geaghan and the show's art department. And Wheaton wasn't the only one that noticed; Steve Geaghan, Richard Cook, Allan Galajda, and Susan Parker all received Cable ACE nominations for their work.

"This [series], without a doubt, is the most challenging of all the shows [I've worked on]," said Geaghan, who's a skilled production design veteran of many television series. Like many others here in Hollywood North, he's worked frequently for the Steven J. Cannell company in the television series *BROKEN BADGES*, *UNSUB*, *TOP OF THE HILL*, and *THE COMMISH*. Other genre series credits include *HIGHLANDER* and *SLIDERS*. His films include *WHO'S HARRY CRUMB* and *BETRAYED*.

"It gives me a great deal of diversity. Each week we have different problems to solve, different visual images to conceive, different environments," said Geaghan. "Being anthology, it would be this way anyway, but this is science fiction anthology, so it goes a step beyond the ordinary. One week we'll be doing something as ordinary as an apartment in the future—35, 40 years in the future, the next week will be in an underground cavern, a hundred years in the future, trying to anticipate the technology that'll be used then."

"I'm constantly looking for new textures, new wall treatments, new finishes, new everything. Again, we're not dealing with a feature film budget here, we have to be extremely judicious about the volume cost of a lot of the materials we use. On 'Light Brigade,' I used everything from corrugated paper interiors for the wall sections in the shaft, to paint-trays on the walls, spray painted, to Rubber-Maid drawer-organizers."

But the first thing that Geaghan did when he read "Light Brigade" was to consider the films' metaphor.

"I'll form rough visual impressions of what it should look like," said Geaghan. "I'll go up and I'll talk with the producer and say 'What do you feel about this?' He'll give me his impressions. Okay, fine. I'll come back and I'll think about it. The process I use to develop this is after that second meeting with the producer, I'll form non-rigid preconceptions at that

“People say ‘Why do you end the world so much?’ ...the answer is ‘Because I can!’ There’s no other show on television where you can just pull the rug out.”

—Screenwriter Brad Wright—

point, about how I'm going to solve the visual problems of that show. What metaphor am I going to hang the visuals of that show on?

"In other words, with 'Light Brigade,' it would be 'absolute minimum for human comfort.' This is not a place for human beings. This was an environment for delivering a bomb. It was like a B-29. That's what it was."

As an example of how Geaghan views the world in a very skewed, very creative way to problem solve a production's design requirements, he reveals the interesting origin of how Chief accesses the ships' computers to activate the bomb's arming mechanism. "In the original script, we wanted a new technology for the transmission of information, and I sat talking with Brad Wright, and I said, 'It should be something really weird and different.' and he said 'Yeah, well, maybe it should be...ocular.'"

"Brad said, 'What would the ocular unit look like?' and I said 'Let me think about that.'"

Of course, when Wright suggests "ocular" he means "by eyesight." In the story, what we believe is merely an eyepatch over Chief's left eye, becomes the means whereby he links into the ships' computers. Chief's left eye is an electronic implant that serves as the computer's interface. What is initially perceived as a character trait suddenly becomes an important plot element.

"And I was down here in my office, and I thought 'God, what would it look like, what would the ocular unit look like?'—and I saw this sitting over there. And there was the ocular unit—I'd just got a new pen. A rotting pen lasts about a year here, then we trash them. It's a rotting pen case, for the storage of a pen."

With this design idea in place, Geaghan still had the problem of adapting a designer pen case into something science fic-

Production designer Steve Geaghan in his office at Vancouver's Bridge Studios, designing space technology that Wheaton described as "way better than the 'Enterprise.'"





Robert Patrick (r) returns as "Quality of Mercy's" Maj. John Skokes, whipping Graham Greene into shape as his Chief Weapon's Officer. They're on a mission to deliver a planet-killing bomb to the alien enemy's homeworld.

tionesque and practical for the purposes of Wright's script needs. So Geaghan conceived an innovative solution, one of the trade's inside secrets, he says. "Everything has to do with scale. You change the scale of a piece of technology—the scale we deal with is human scale, you understand? We just take something that's interesting, and just change the scale, and there's no longer a pen-case. It's become something else."

Blowing up his seven-inch pen case into human-sized dimensions and altering the features of the design suddenly became the spaceship's Ocular unit. "It doesn't happen all the time, that's one of the tricks I use; to take an object and transform it. In the extremely condensed time period that we have—seven days—to develop these shows, I have to use every trick I've got to come up with original visual solutions to the problems of the show."

When it came time to somehow conjure up the interior walls of the spaceship, Geaghan didn't have to look very far. All he had to do was hop next door to the Bridge Studios and prowl through the Home Depot home improvement center and examine the

The effects teaser of "The Light Brigade." Earth ships are attacked by the aliens and destroyed by overwhelming firepower, feature film quality effects, supervised by Steve Anker.



wares for ideas.

"I'm walking and I'm thinking, 'God, how am I going to use one of these for the walls?'" said Geaghan. "And I looked and I saw very thin plastic, vacuformed 2' by 4' plastic vents—stuff for attics. I looked at it and said 'If we back-faced this, or spray it with foam, it had the rigidity that I need.' It was like \$1.99 or \$1.39 a sheet. And I'm thinking, 'This'll give me the [affordable] volume I need to do a different wall and I can use this everywhere.'

"Now we put them on, and we had a very intricate joining device for them. Like a structural member that joined all these pieces together. Those particular vacuformed panels were the majority of our standard wall sections throughout the starship Light Brigade. You've got to look at it in a whole different variety.

"Once you look at it with what you know now, you'll see how tacky it really is," he chuckled. "And the colour scheme on that ship was designated by deck."

Once the walls were up, there were matters relating to the ships' lighting to take care of. "There wasn't general lighting," notes Geaghan. "It was all source-lighting. All the lighting that was used in that show was the sources that were there."

The Light Brigade is a ship that has a terribly wild, intricate claustrophobic interior. It is a design that is as far away as you can get from the pristine sterility and carpeted comfort of the starship Enterprise. "When Brad conceived the show, he said, 'What could we do with this ship?' This was a ship that was assembled very quickly out of bits and pieces. It was meant to be an extremely difficult ship to get around. It was simply a deliv-

up for us. So we ended up filming in this huge space with a wall. It didn't have a wall on one side, so we built the other side and put a gate in it. And that's how we filmed it."

"Power. Right here on Earth. That's the glory road. That I can give you."

—Preacher to Frank Kelton

HEART'S DESIRE

★★

#51, 2/28/97. Written by Alan Brennert. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

In the year 1872, in the western Oregon coast, a mysterious alien visitor in the guise of a preacher (David Longworth), offers ultimate powers to four cowboys. Jake (Caspar Van Dien) and Ben (Gary Basaraba) Miller are two brothers who have returned home to the town of Heart's Desire. While Jake looks up an old girlfriend, Miriam (Ocean Hellman), two other colleagues, Frank Kelton (Esai Morales) and J.D. Rees (Jed Rees) receive from the preacher strange invincible powers. Later, the preacher provides the same abilities to Jake and Ben. As the preacher passively looks on from the sidelines, the four men with ultimate powers are pitted against each other. Who's going to win?

This is an offbeat, different kind of OUTER LIMITS story. Here, Alan Brennert has melded two very old concepts: the western, and the well-worn theme that "absolute power corrupts absolutely." This is a good stretch for the show. However, as interesting as the idea is to meld these elements, certain actors' performances and the choice of characters to be in this drama could have been better. For example, the actor playing Ben Miller essayed the role in such a broad style that ultimately he comes off as being one-dimensional.

"We did this one completely backwards," grinned Jonathan Glassner. "We realized there was this great western town set standing [in a suburban area near Vancouver, previously used for the Canadian TV series BORDERTOWN]. Rather than starting with a story, we started with a set. Alan said to me that he always wanted to write a western. So I called him and said, 'We've got this western set. Can you come up with a story with some western science fiction stuff?' I said I didn't want it to be a time travel story. We've all seen that too many times. There are so many different time machine stories. So I said, 'Let's do a story set in the old west where aliens come or something.' So he went and thought about it and came back with a great story. We sent him blueprints and photos of the location so he knew what existed. So he wrote the show to the set."

Glassner also passed on an amusing anecdote while on the set of this episode. "The horses we used on the show are trained to go on 'Action!' So, the director could never yell 'Action!' Mario had to yell 'Go!' to the actors. And, he did yell 'Action!' accidentally a couple of times and we had to cut it because all the horses started up."

An alien transforms into a mysterious preacher in the 1872 Oregon town of "Heart's Desire," and dispenses amazing powers, a sci-fi western.



**"You're hallucinating. It's the spider poison."
"But the dreams are as real as this one...I don't
know what's real!"**
—Captain Parker and Commander John Virgil

TEMPESTS

★★★

#52, 3/07/97. Written by Hart Hanson. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

When the spaceship *Tempest* crash lands on a moon of a distant colonized world, the ship's crew, Commander John Virgil (Eric McCormack), Doctor Vasquez (Kenneth Welsh), Governor Mudry (Marie Stillin) and Captain Parker (Burt Young), are injured in the process. Their precious cargo is a cure for a deadly disease needed at the colony. When Virgil dons a spacesuit to inspect the exterior of their spaceship, to determine if they can lift off again, he's attacked by strange alien spiders. Scrambling back into the ship, Virgil bounces between two vivid realities: recovering safely at home with his family and still being stuck inside the ship with the others. Virgil is slowly losing his sanity because he can't figure out which scenario is the true reality?

This episode is a great study in misdirection, but which direction, we're not saying! Good cast and good acting abounds here aided by a taut script that doesn't let go until the very last possible moment. Burt Young delivers a very quietly understated, but not monotone performance. The creepy spiders certainly added to the horror! "Tempests" also brought back memories of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*'s episode, "Frame of Mind," when Commander Riker experienced a similar situation.

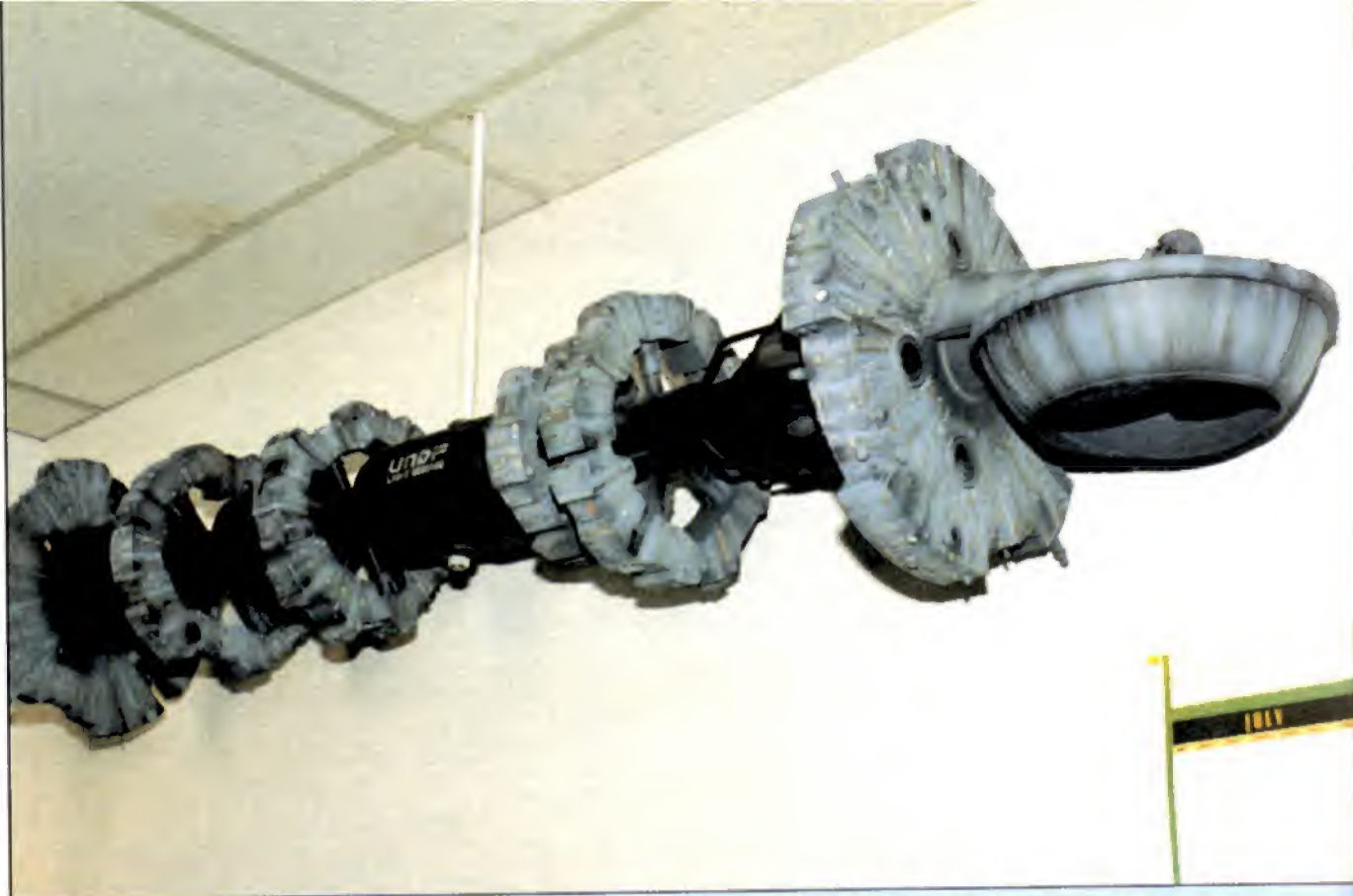
To provide a semblance of reality in this story, a spaceship was constructed and placed on hydraulic gimbels in order to create a rock n' rolling craft that would add color and excitement for the actors and the television audience. "We achieved quite a steep angle," said Brad Wright. In fact, Glassner noted that they managed a steep 45 degrees tilt for the cameras. "We didn't want to do it like *STAR TREK* when the director says to everyone, 'Everyone lean RIGHT!'" laughed Glassner. "It just looks silly. We wanted it to look more real by forcing the actors to have to really keep balance."

Brad Wright recalls an amusing anecdote during the production. "I went up to the director after the first day of shooting and I said, 'Post-production noticed that the dailies were at an odd angle, but don't worry, they'll straighten them out.' And he went, 'WHAT?' and I said, 'I'm kidding!'"

Actor Eric McCormack, who was Commander Virgil in this episode noted, "The ship not only could shake us and really give us the feeling of the crash, but once the ship had crashed, they could tilt the entire set 15 or 20 degrees so that any efforts the characters were making to get from one side of the ship to the other, trying to get through wreckage, was real. It wasn't [just] grunting and acting, it was actually an effort to get around that set."

"What appealed to me about this script, was as much as there was a lot of science fiction and a lot

The Governor, consumed by giant alien spiders in "The Tempest," as the crew of the titular ship crashes on the moon of a colonized world.



Production designer Steve Geaghan's ship of the title. The six-foot model hangs in the office of Brad Wright, (producer of the series and the episode's screenwriter) at Vancouver's Bridge Studios.

ery system for a bomb. It was not a highly finished ship. It wasn't meant to be beautiful. It was meant to be small and cramped and difficult to get from one section to another. When whole sections of them were irradiated and unaccessible for human beings, they had to crawl through other access hatches in a jury-rigged kind of affair to get to their objective."

The bold shrewdness of this ship's design by Wright and Geaghan worked in favor of both the show's production budget and for dramatic purposes. The ship's 'quick and dirty' look with the crazy hodgepodge of "slapped together" pieces of equipment made for an affordable set to construct within the series budget. But it also served to add to the unfolding drama as our characters crawled, climbed, and sweated their way throughout the ship.

The only regret that Wright and Geaghan have in regard to this episode was a wish to give the viewer a better understanding of the layout of the ship's architecture. Noted Geaghan, "In talking with Brad, subsequently, what we needed and what we realized we didn't have was some sort of a device that would keep the audience apprised of where they were and where they had to go graphically. We didn't have the money to do that device."

Geaghan regards "Light Brigade" as an exhilarating experience for the creative challenges it threw at him and for the opportunities to actively collaborate with his colleagues. "Brad is a terrific writer," declares Geaghan. "And he's a fabulous collaborator. I would never have got as much onto the screen if Brad and I hadn't spent the time that we spent, developing the script together. And this goes for

all the *OUTER LIMITS* shows: that much of my time is spent, upstairs on the second floor with each of the writers, going through their scripts with them. And they'll say, 'Can we do this? Can we do that?'"

"Some shows are actor-shows. Some shows are director-shows. That show was an art-department show. We all got a chance to shine there."

"The Light Brigade" and "Quality of Mercy" are two stories that offer an exploration of a universe full of darkness and despair, rare moments in television drama, where Evil triumphs.

"There's a reason I do that on this show," grinned Wright. "And it's because that's another thing that defines the *OUTER LIMITS*. People say, 'Why do you end the world so much?' I think the answer is, 'Because I can!'" he laughed. "There's no other show on television where you can just pull the rug out, just make everyone go, 'Whooaa!' Because every other show, the main characters have to go on to another story. But we don't have to do that. Not all the time, but occasionally, we allow ourselves to be dark." □

"The Light Brigade" delivers its deadly payload in the explosive conclusion. Wright explores a universe full of darkness and despair, where sometimes evil wins—rare in episodic television.



and a television company. "Because we had not done a series at any great length before, the demands are very high. When we started working on the show, coming from a movie background, the pace, the quality of the crew, to the time schedules took adjusting in the beginning.

"We started, in many ways, with a movie. 'Sandkings,' in my mind, is as good technically and creatively as any movie we've ever made. So by starting with 'Sandkings' we were back in the movie business. Then, we had to jump from that into the seven or seven and a half day schedules [of episodic filming]. That took a little adjustment for the three of us."

Noted Densham, "When I came back in August, I continued to contribute in an overview manner. I worry about the context of the series in terms of an overview of the stories being developed. I'm not so deeply involved in tweaking each and every show. When I was originally doing it, that was necessary because we were struggling to make sure the shows worked. And now we had a team in place who was doing that really well. I'm reading all the scripts and watching all the cuts and observe the casting, I tend to feed my notes in through a backdoor process."

"Sandkings" may have been the premier, flagship episode for the series but the very first OUTER LIMITS filmed after a 30-year hiatus belongs to "The Choice," starring Megan Follows and Frances Sternhagen. Behind the camera was director Mark Sobel.

Sobel was nervous and excited on the first day of shooting (September 8, 1994). "I felt like I was handed my fantasy! God! I was a little kid sitting on the couch watching the OUTER LIMITS, and suddenly, here I am launching it again! The MGM executives were up from Hollywood on the set and everyone's watching and you gotta produce. But, fortunately, they loved what was being done."

A veteran Hollywood director, Sobel helped Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher fly in

“[OUTER LIMITS] was still an enormously creative experience because you're handed all these toys and tools to make this fantasy come true...”

—Director Mark Sobel—



Andy Groening as "The New Breed," the first season series debut for director Mario Azzopardi. Makeup created by XFX.

theological type shows that were made in the 1950s and early 1960s."

Looking back over the first two years of 44 episodes, Pen Densham reflects on the results and rewards of the series' / shake-down cruise. "I think our first season surprised us how well we did," said Densham. "We were pioneering, in that point, in many directions. We were pioneering an anthology series, which we've never done before. We were bringing a technology to the special effects [when] we were still learning who we could work with to bring the kind of quality we would hope for. We were bringing a crew together who could shoot every week different sets and styles. That first year was a fantastic achievement."

"The second year, the shows got even better because we had this experience base we could build on. The sense of stories were more accomplished. In the beginning, it was a machine that we had to feed stories. Now that we're up and running, we can actually be even more selective."

Densham counts "Sandkings", "Quality of Mercy," "A Stitch in Time," "Valerie 23" and "Vanishing Act" as among his favorite

continued on page 94

the first season of LOIS AND CLARK: THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN. "The beautiful thing about THE OUTER LIMITS, like feature films, is that in that particular 60 minutes, everything is being done from square one. The world is being created."

"OUTER LIMITS is truly, for a one-hour television, [the] most creative and exciting experience I've ever had. Forgetting the fact that I was like a kid in a candy store, beyond that, even if I had never seen the OUTER LIMITS as a kid, it was still an enormously creative experience because you're handed all the toys and tools to make this fantasy come true and you're not married to what someone else did the week before. It's brand new."

"I wish television would go back more to that anthology format. OUTER LIMITS has been so successful for MGM. I hope, maybe, the networks will notice that and maybe we'll start a trend towards an-

of screaming back and forth to each other, the reality of the situation was just one guy trying to get home to his wife and child."

"I've never been excited before!"

—Beth Carter to a cabbie

THE AWAKENING

★★

#52, 3/14/97. Written by James Crocker. Directed by George Bloomfield.

To remedy a neurological disorder that prevents human patients from experiencing emotions of any kind, Dr. Steven Molstad (Gordon Pinsent) installs an electronic implant into the brain of Beth Carter (Lela Rochon), one of his patients. Molstad and his colleague, Dr. Joan Garrison (Michelle Greene), become excited when they see the implant works and that Beth experiences emotions for the first time in her life. To further study the progress of the implant, and to help Beth become acclimated into everyday life, Joan takes Beth to her home. However, when Beth starts hearing strange voices and starts having visions of grey-skinned alien beings kidnapping her, she becomes terribly frightened and the doctors are worried the "chip" is malfunctioning.

The initial premise of a woman who's never had emotions before and suddenly is given them is very OUTER LIMITS-like and worthy of an episode. Indeed, most potent in this story is the performance by Lela Rochon as Beth. But the story's subplot veers into a direction that strays from the real issue at hand: what would it have been like to receive new-found emotions suddenly and how would it be to deal with them? An alternate sub-plot could have the scientists deliberately pacing Beth through a series of tests and trials to determine the effectiveness of the chip and learning from the after-effects. A story of a woman "hearing things" and "being abducted" also echoes two other OL episodes, "The Message" and "Beyond the Veil."

"It's a very different OUTER LIMITS," opined Sam Egan. "It's an alien abduction story. It's not what it appears to be. Fans, if they think they can predict where an episode is going on the OUTER LIMITS based on prior experience, I think will be very taken aback by our treatment of this story. It's very unusual."

The actors who were hired to play the aliens were very tiny, said Egan, and this led to some amusing moments on the set. "Prosthetics they wore made it very difficult for them to see, so on occasions we had takes where they were literally bumping into the furniture."



An XFX alien takes five on the set of "The Awakening." Unable to see, the tiny actors were literally bumping into the set during filming.

"I'm begging you, please kill me now!"

—Reynolds to Jim

NEW LEASE

★★ 1/2

#53, 3/21/97. Written by Sam Egan. Directed by Jason Priestley.

After five years of study two research

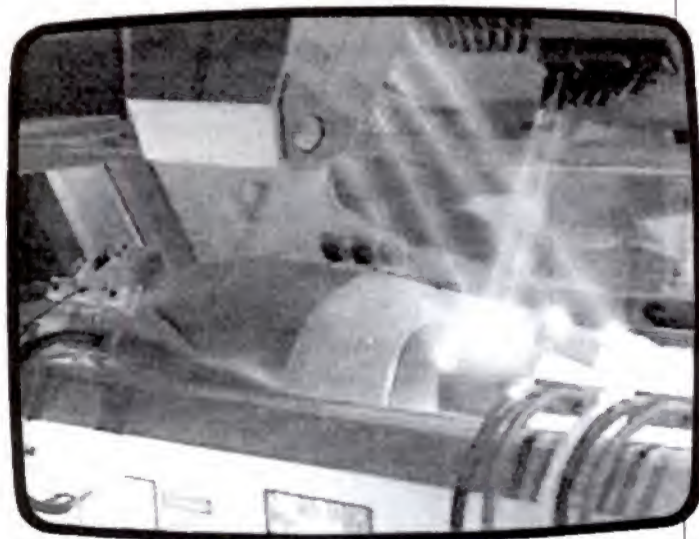
scientists, Charles McCamber (Michael Ontkean) and Dr. James Houghton (Stephen Lang), receive a frozen cadaver and using their latest invention, the Scanning Molecular Reorganizer (SMR), successfully revive a man, Mr. Reynolds (Terence Kelly), who died of a heart attack. Their elation turns to depression when the process only lasts for a short time and McCamber begins to have doubts about the ethics of their experiments. Later, when Jim is mugged and shot, McCamber takes him through the machine and revives his colleague. Now Jim believes his time is short and he reapproaches his family hoping for better relations.

A great premise turns around when Charlie McCamber, after being devoted for five years to a project that's aimed at reviving the dead, suddenly has a change of heart in the ethics of his actions and opposes Jim's desire to prolong Reynold's life. Well, any scientist that's going to devote five years of his life to a grand, controversial project, needs to graduate from Scientific Ethics 101 class. His head ought to be clear and free of any doubts of the benefits of the research. Understandably, this change of heart is for dramatic purposes. Otherwise, Lang and Ontkean deliver interesting performances and the special effects are top-notch with an interesting twisty ending.

There's echoes in this script of an old TWILIGHT ZONE, "Escape Clause," a deal-with-the-devil-for-immortality story that also has the protagonist going to prison at the story's conclusion.

"It's an emotional story about what are the priorities of one's life?" mused Sam Egan. "One man is emotionally detached from his family because of his obsession with work, and now, he's got a few days to live [and] he has to decide what he's going to devote himself to with his remaining time. And then of course, the story has a wonderful OUTER LIMITS twist [at the end]."

Commenting on Jason's Priestley's directorial debut on the show, Sam Egan said, "In his prior directing jobs, Jason has done 18 or 19 BEVERLY HILLS 90210s. He's been on film sets since the age of eight. He did an excellent job for us. Got great performances from the actors. He was film-savvy in a way that you wouldn't associate with someone of that age. He was professional and natural and did a wonderful job for us."



Terence Kelly, a dead man, gets revived by the Scanning Molecular Reorganizer (SMR) in "New Lease," a lesson in scientific ethics.

"You've been making obscure discoveries in the last 20 years. I'm sorry, Dad but that won't change the world!"

—Paul to his father, Dr. Martin Nodel

DOUBLE HELIX

★★★ 1/2

#54, 3/28/97. Written by Jonathan Glassner. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

A world-famous, but eccentric geneticist, Dr. Martin Nodel (Ron Rifkin), announces to a group of students and members of a University faculty that he's made an important discovery in the field

OUTER LIMITS

MAIN TITLES

Donald Beck on creating the show's moody, layered opening sequence.

By Frank Garcia

For the series' entrancing title sequence, Trilogy Entertainment turned to a designer who made it his career to grab viewers' attention at the very first frame. Donald R. Beck has been designing main titles and promotional films for over 20 years for television, film and videos. His experience stretches back to the ABC Movie of the Week slit-scan presentation titles in the 1970s. His client list reads like a who's who in Hollywood. Paramount Home Video, Lucasfilm, MGM/UA, UPN, Warner Brothers Records and Trans-World Entertainment are all companies that rely on Beck for their promotional and main title needs.

To provide the inspiration for the main title visuals, executive producer Richard Lewis put Beck together with still photographer Jerry Uelsmann, who has made his career publishing bizarre and artistic composite still photographs. Since 1974, Jerry Uelsmann has been a graduate research professor at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Uelsmann's photographs have been exhibited in more than 100 individual shows in the United States and abroad over the past 30 years. Uelsmann has published at least six books on photography since 1970. His most recent volume, published in 1996, is entitled *Uelsmann/ Yosemite* a photographic essay on the national park. With direct access to Uelsmann's stunning photographic library, Beck had in hand a pictorial and conceptual foundation from which to build the main title.

"We put an immense amount of care into the way the opening titles were created," said executive producer Pen Densham. "I had a vision for a tunnel of images so that you could never quite see all the images and they would be gestalt images. If you watch the same titles over and over again, you

would never get bored with it."

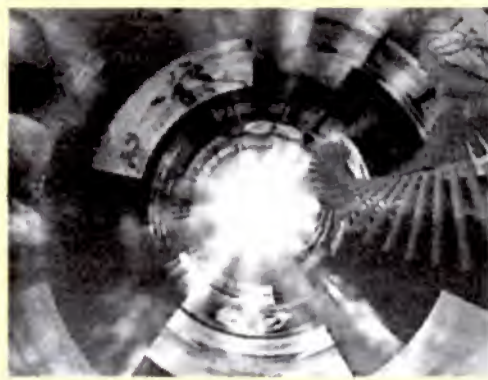
Developing this visual content began with a series of long conversations between Richard Lewis and Donald Beck and from these discussions grew detailed storyboards. (Like a comic strip, storyboards graphically illustrate frame by frame the content and style of the visuals. These images serve as a valuable tool for everyone involved in the project, for them to see and understand the goals at hand.)

"We were trying to achieve something unusual, something very layered and unique," recalled Beck. "Something captivating. Something that the viewer would not get tired of after seeing each episode of OUTER LIMITS. You have to look at the main titles several times before you capture all the hints and subtleties of various layers involved in the creating of the titles. We worked on about four or five different, very articulated storyboards. There was one storyboard for each second, which is very unusual." The process was so meticulous that Beck reports, in the end, the titles took the team about three and a half to four months to complete the required 60 seconds.

What's unusual about the Uelsmann photos is that each image is made up of a series of images juxtaposed together. This is a technique known as "Post Visualization." With this technique, most of the

Trilogy Producer Richard Lewis suggested to Beck that they use Uelsmann's photography for the thought-provoking tableaux.





The series' stunning main title sequence is the work of titles specialist Donald R. Beck, using the imagery of noted photographer Jerry Uelsmann. It's a Rorschach experience that delights on repeated viewings.

creative work is done in the darkroom, where the artist combines separate, individual elements to create a new image. For example, a picture of a house has the roots of an enormous tree beneath it. A naked woman lying on the ground has a clock on her body. Lewis and Beck became enamored with the idea of taking Uelsmann's work and making it come alive on video.

"We decided we wanted to make those still photographs move," said Beck. "So we basically took them apart. We went back to Jerry Uelsmann's photographs and purchased the rights to the pictures. Jerry reprinted separate elements of all those photographs so we could actually move them. We'd take one-dimensional still photographs and make them as three-dimensional as possible."

With Uelsmann's consent and cooperation, the team manipulated and orchestrated the photos into a series of kaleidoscopic images. Then they choreographed the images to the musical score, created by composers John Van Tongeren and Mark Mancina. "His photographs are made up of three or four dozens of different elements sometimes," explained Beck. "So we went back to those original elements, transferred them separately and joined them together."

The final visuals decided upon by Beck and the producers is almost a Rorschach test. Video snow. "There is nothing wrong with your television...we have control of transmission..." Horizontal. Vertical. "...deluge you with a thousand channels..." Pictures. Pictures. Pictures. "...we can shape your vision..." Man. Hands. House. Bright light. Skies. Eye. Clock. Falling figures. Red grid. "...awe and mystery..." DNA strands. Descending black and white

“We were trying to achieve something unusual...something that the viewer would not get tired of after seeing each episode of OUTER LIMITS.”

—Designer Donald R. Beck—

photographs. "...from the deepest inner mind to...the OUTER LIMITS..." Video snow. Black.

Encouraged to discuss the depth and symbolism behind his visual poetry, Beck resisted initially, "I don't like to get too intellectual about various aspects of the main title. I think it speaks for itself. People should interpret it as we do with any kind of art.

Like how we interpret beauty in other human beings, and how we interpret beauty in a painting, a movie, a poem, a scene or the theater. You interpret it a certain way. One shouldn't be colored too much by what the artist had in mind. I think you should look at it and draw your own conclusions."

But Beck does make a few revelations. "The hands, the heart, the house are basic to the human condition," he said. "These are places and tools by which a person summons up those demons deep inside—either imagined or real—you can look at the image of the eye. People say the eye is the gateway to the soul. That's a major part of the main title. The basic elements of earth, wind and fire, man, soul and spirit, taken collectively is a very magical main title.

"Oh, what is that supposed to mean? What are those black and white pictures floating down that vortex?" Well, what is it to you? Is it a homage? Maybe it is a homage. Maybe it's not. Maybe they are black and white pictures from the original. Maybe they're not. I can't tell you. What does it mean to you? Everyone has to interpret the art as one sees the art without knowing the backstory, of what I or Richard had in mind. At the end of the 60 seconds, does it invite you? Does it give you a feeling? Does it appeal to your senses that you want to watch the show? I think the answer is probably yes." □

of genetics. He's mapped new regions of the human DNA genome, and Nodel unveils a fish with legs as physical proof. Later, concerned about his personal health and the possibility of not obtaining the funding necessary to continue his research, Nodel injects himself with a serum that alters his body chemistry. Thereafter Nodel becomes obsessed with a mission he doesn't understand, but he recruits six university students, including his son Paul and his girlfriend Hope (Kathleen Duborg), for a mysterious research project that takes them into the mountain woods in search of a destination he does not know.

A good script and Rifkin's spirited performance elevates this episode ahead of the average episodic show. With so much attention devoted today to arcane and mysterious cults, this storyline eerily resonates with real life. Surprisingly, there are thematic bonds between "Helix" and Arthur C. Clarke's 2001. Both stories are tales of aliens patiently waiting for mankind to reach an evolutionary plateau before being contacted. "Helix" does in 45 minutes what 2001/2010 takes a very long time to do. Even further, "Helix" connects with the original OUTER LIMITS episode "The Inheritors" which also concludes with a group of humans rendezvousing with a spaceship for benevolent purposes.

"We had to build a giant object which turns out to be a spaceship that was supposed to be 100 feet tall in a giant cave," said Glassner, who wrote this episode. "We didn't quite know how to do it. So we ended up just building the bottom half of it and doing a matte painting of the top half."



Ron Rifkin displays a map that has grown on his back after injecting himself with serum to explore the human DNA genome in "Double Helix."

"If anything happens to you down here, the doomsday device goes off. And if we don't dig you out of here by a year, you can assume the aliens have defeated mankind. That's when you stop pushing that button!"

—General Eiger to Lieutenant Benjamin Conklin

DEADMAN'S SWITCH

★★★

#55, 4/04/97. Written by Ben Richardson. Directed by Jeff Woolnough.

General Eiger (Donnelly Rhodes) escorts Lieutenant Ben Conklin (James LeGros) to a secret bunker thousands of feet deep in the Arctic, for an assignment that will keep the young lieutenant in complete isolation for a year. Conklin is astonished to discover that his job is to help safeguard the safety of the entire planet against a potential alien invasion. To guarantee that the aliens don't invade and exploit the earth, the military have rigged a doomsday device set to trigger all the nuclear and biological weapons in the world at once, unless one of five people manning deep bunkers in secret locations around the world stop it from igniting. At regular intervals when an alarm sounds, Lt. Conklin and his bunker teammates Katya Rubinov (Kristin Lehman) of the Russian Republic Army, Gwen Wellington (Merrilyn Gann) a psychologist,

Donald (Ellis Williams) a priest, and Hong (Yee Jee Tso) an electrical engineer, share the task of scanning their hand and pushing a red button. This "dead man's switch" will stop Armageddon unless each and every one of them fails.

As their lonely task stretches into weeks and months, the team slowly learn about each other and adopt "virtual" relationships. General Eiger transmits irregular reports from the outside world regarding man's first contact with aliens from outer space. Soon paranoia and exhaustion begins to set in, and strange events started to occur, snapping the guardians out of their restlessness.

This is an intriguing, well executed premise, with average to above-average acting from individual participants. However what's immediately telegraphed from the teaser is that this is going to be a dark episode. The teleplay writer Richardson makes every effort to keep the tenor of the oncoming drama as ambiguous as possible, but every beat nevertheless aims at an ominous conclusion. Jeff Woolnough's taut direction certainly helps keep us interested and engaged in the drama. And because this is OUTER LIMITS, we're not disappointed. It's just that we have now come to have certain expectations given such a potentially cataclysmic situation. A certain amount of tension, as a result is removed knowing the writer won't be afraid to send us into a direction that the drama is capable of taking us. On the other hand, it's actually fun to get there!

"The real interesting challenge of that show was the way we used live video feeds throughout the episode," noted Naren Shankar, executive story consultant. "From a production standpoint it was extremely ambitious and complex. We built one set for the episode. We set up monitors in it with live video feeds going between five different actors. We had actors in different parts of the sets as if they were in different bunkers around the world.

"They were very near to each other and it was all done via live video feeds because we decided early in prep that it would be impossible to do if we pre-recorded the pieces. It was very tricky but I think the end result was a lot of fun. It was a real technical challenge to do that."



James LeGros scans his hand at the "Deadman's Switch," deep in an underground bunker where only he and five others can prevent Armageddon.

"There's a rhythm. It moves inside you. I know how it makes me feel. And I know we have to share it."
—Joyce Taylor to her brother Devon

MUSIC OF THE SPHERES ★★★

#56, 5/09/97. Written by Steven Barnes. Directed by David Warry-Smith.

When Devon Taylor's (Joshua Jackson) sister, Joyce (Kirsten Dunst) listens to a sound file from his computer, she interprets the radio signal recording from deep space as being "the coolest" music she's ever heard. It's so cool that she plays the tape for her boyfriend, and soon, members of her high school all become captivated by the soothing static sounds at the local night club. But

episodes of the period.

In its third season Jonathan Glassner was promoted to full executive producer. New faces behind the scenes were co-executive producers Sam Egan [QUINCY] and Bill Froehlich [MacGYVER and POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY], who helped ease the workload for Brad Wright and Glassner as they geared up STARGATE SG-1 for MGM/UA.

Also sandwiched in an office space between Wright and Glassner was executive story consultant Naren Shankar [STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION and seaQUEST]. "I would say that year three, in many ways, was our strongest season of the show," said Shankar. "We had some really fine episodes. I don't think we quite got to the high point hit by 'A Stitch in Time' which I really consider to be the high watermark of the series. But we had some really solid episodes. 'Bits of Love,' 'The Camp' and 'Tempests' turned out very well. 'Hearts and Minds' and 'In Another Life' turned out very well. 'Second Thoughts,' the Howie Mandel episode was excellent. 'Rites of Passage' turned out really well.

"As a season you look at it and say 'There's great episodes and good episodes' but we didn't really have any bad episodes. I would say on balance the season was extremely strong."

Chris Dickie, a third season story editor, reported that Shankar "absolutely gets the series, which sometimes is hard to do. And that's very important."

Third season's special remake episode, "A Feasibility Study," (see page 39) starring David McCallum wasn't the original impetus for a collaboration between Trilogy Entertainment and Joseph Stefano. There was another script that started the ball rolling. But that script has now been shelved. Series executive producer Jonathan Glassner explained, "It was just creative differences," he said. "Joe wanted to go one way, Pen wanted to go another way. We all wanted to go yet another way.

“It's been one of the real thrills of my television life to be involved with this show. I'm thrilled that it has become such a fixture of MGM-TV.”

—MGM-TV Pres. John Symes—



Ayre Gross gets radiation treatments to stop his paralyzing fear after his sister's death in fourth season's "Fear Itself."

Rather than try to squeeze something out of that to satisfy us all, and end up being terrible, we decided to go into a different direction just to do it right. We may end up doing it with someone else, but that's up in the air."

And that direction was to look back at "Feasibility," a favorite story among the OUTER LIMITS staffers. "We've been talking about redoing it anyway, and it never dawned on us that Joe was the one who wrote it," admitted Glassner. "So, why not have the guy who wrote the original write the remake?"

Pen Densham said, he came up with an idea of creating a bridge between the two generations of OUTER LIMITS from watching a one-hour promotional TV special titled THE OUTER LIMITS PHENOMENON. The show was an examination of the new series, featuring film clips and interviews with actors and producers. It also had a retrospective segment dedicated to the original

black and white series.

"It reconfirmed again if I could actually embrace the parallel values in both series, in the way that was creative and stimulating, that we might make an episode that linked both shows," said Densham. "I have a story that I have created that involved characters who are older than the average characters in OUTER LIMITS and had a purpose and a sociological statement that I thought was very interesting.

"I pitched the idea of a reunion show to John Symes at MGM saying that it would be a wonderful thing to do that kind of show. He came back with a suggestion which I immediately endorsed, which was, 'Have you thought about having Joseph Stefano write it?' I said, 'Let me talk to Joseph. I think it's a fantastic idea.'

"So, with a great deal of respect for the gentleman, I sent him my story and said, 'I don't know what you think, but were you ever [to] want to write this, I have support from MGM. They would allow you to do this, with great pleasure.'"

"It sounded like a very good idea," responded Stefano, when asked about the pro-

continued on page 99

OUTER LIMITS

SANDKINGS

Re-creating a classic for new OUTER LIMITS' pilot episode.

By Frank Garcia

The choice of using George R.R. Martin's chilling novella *Sandkings* as the opening episode for a new OUTER LIMITS television series was almost predestined. Executive producer Richard B. Lewis had been a fan of the Hugo and Nebula Award-winning story and his company Trilogy Entertainment was considering the property for potential feature treatment.

Martin's novella is a futuristic tale that focuses on Simon Kress, a man who purchases the alien Sandkings at a mysterious import shop on another planet. The insects develop elaborate cultures and worship Kress. Apparently, the spark for the story idea came to Martin when he was studying in college. A friend had acquired a tank of piranhas. During weekly get-togethers while watching television, during commercial breaks, they would feed the hungry little gobblers goldfish and other food and watch the action. Using his experience here as the basis of the idea, Martin let his imagination roam and *Sandkings* was the result.

"It was very exciting. I always loved the original show, and it was nice to have a chance to be a part of the revival of it," said Martin. "They wanted to begin with a fairly big story—something well known and scary that would get people's attention."

Martin was reluctant to give *Sandkings* to Lewis and company because the novella had reportedly been optioned for feature films over the years. "A writer makes a lot more money if his work is made into a feature film, than a television show," said Martin. "So the negotiation was somewhat lengthy, but we finally came to terms and we agreed and went ahead."

Because Martin was too occupied with



Three generations of Bridges—Lloyd, Beau and Dylan—star in the 3/26/95 pilot, based on the novella by George R. R. Martin.

writing his latest novel, *A Game of Thrones* (Bantam, 1996), to adapt his own story for television, he recommended his friend and colleague Melinda Snodgrass for the chores. Snodgrass had already made her name in science fiction prose by helping Martin edit the *Wild Cards* book series and is known to the SF-TV audience for her work as a story editor on *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*'s second season.

This particular adaptation was by no means a faithful one. Characters were added. Setting and time period were changed. As a story, virtually nothing from the novella appeared in the televised edition of "Sandkings." What does remain, however, is the spirit of Martin's story.

"I think she did a good job, given the parameters of what she was doing there," said Martin. "I've worked in television myself, I know the budgetary limitation, I know why many of the changes were made. Such as set-

when the tape's hypnotizing signals attack all the teenagers with brutal physical effects, all 78 of them wind up at the hospital where the doctors including Devon and Joyce's father, Dr. Taylor (Howard Hesseman), are at a loss to explain or cure the phenomenon. Unable to contain the sounds from spreading into the general public, doctors and the military scramble for a fast solution. Meanwhile, Devon conducts more research with the tape. Soon he discovers that despite his advanced age in the early 20s, he's not immune to the signal's biologically altering effects.

Once again, Steven Barnes whips up a fascinating, unique idea executed as a mystery that ultimately unfolds into a highly surprising conclusion. In fact, if there's one overall statement to make about this incarnation of OUTER LIMITS, it would be that the show as with this episode, consistently delivers stories that appear as if they have jumped from the pages of science fiction prose and come alive.

"Steven originally pitched that as a generation gap story," said Naren Shankar. "It was like the young kids could hear the music and it affects them and everyone else thinks they're crazy and they don't get what the music means. The trickiest thing about that episode was figuring out, from a production standpoint, what that music would really sound like? We went over and over about that. Was it a space signal? Was it music? It couldn't just be like static noise that you normally hear from a radio or an astronomical source. It had to be something the audience could identify with as well. From a post-production, sound design standpoint that was probably our most difficult sound design issue for that season. That 'music' was integral to the story. When you're writing a script, you say, '...a weird sound...' but when you actually have to hear it, you'd better come up with something."



Kirsten Dunst gets destroyed physically by listening to "The Music of the Spheres," cool sounds from space that become a teen craze.

"What are you lookin' at?"

—Becca Paulson to the 8x10 Guy

THE REVELATIONS OF BECCA PAULSON

★★

#57, 5/09/97. Written by Brad Wright. Based on the story by Stephen King. Directed by Steven Weber.

A lonely young woman, Becca Paulson (Catherine O'Hara), who lives with her husband (John Diehl) in a trailer park one day comes across a pistol in a closet. When the gun accidentally discharges, lodging a bullet in her forehead, she begins seeing and hearing strange things. The image of a man in the photograph of an 8x10 frame (Steven Weber) comes alive and talks to her. Slowly, Becca Paulson descends into madness...

As unique as it is to have OUTER LIMITS tackle a Stephen King story, and directed by an actor who headlined a mini-series remake of *THE SHINING* for ABC, the author's stamp remains indelible throughout. Performances and direction are deliciously quirky and disturbing at the same

time. It's fascinating to see such a story applied here. Ultimately, though, this tale doesn't belong in *THE OUTER LIMITS* but as an episode of *THE STEPHEN KING THEATER*.

"The most interesting thing about that from a production standpoint is that it's one of the most atypical, if not *the* most atypical *OUTER LIMITS* that's ever been done," declared story consultant Naren Shankar. "What we tend to do are shows that are based around clear-cut science fiction concepts. Either some sort of technological device or some sort of sounds from outer space. They all have a grounding in science. 'Becka Paulson' really did not. Interestingly, a lot of people who saw this episode - those who are not typical SF fans—loved the episode because it was quirky, odd and funny in a *TWIN PEAKS* kind of way. A lot of people gravitated toward it."



With a bullet in the forehead, Catherine O'Hara sees strange things in "The Revelations of Becka Paulson," based on a story by Stephen King.

"I know your strengths and your faults and I know you couldn't have been responsible for what happened up there."

—Robin Dysart to William Clark

BODIES OF EVIDENCE

★★

#58, 5/09/97. Written by Chris Dickie. Story by Chris Dickie and Ryland Kelley. Directed by Melvin Van Peebles.

While orbiting the Earth in the space station Meridian, crewmembers of the station unexpectedly are confronted by individuals from their personal lives and they meet horrifying deaths. Captain William Clark (Mario Van Peebles) is brought forth into a court-martial hearing to determine if he is responsible for their deaths. His ex-wife Robin Dysart (Jennifer Beals) defends him in the hearings. In testimony, Dr. Helene Dufour (Guylaine St. Onge), the one other survivor of the incident, helps reconstruct greater details of the events that we see in a series of flashbacks.

This is an interesting tale written by Chris Dickie, who no doubt used his legal background to support the trial proceedings. The episode cross-juxtaposes an adventure aboard a space station with a court drama. It's difficult to root for Captain Clark while he's on trial because if the true cause of his colleague's deaths aboard the space station is experimental drug research, an antidote for "space psychosis" and not alien activity, this would not be an *OUTER LIMITS* episode. Alien activity is surely an element and so it is. It's difficult to believe that the story is headed towards anything else but a dark ending. We know as the drama unfolds, that Clark's nightmare is one that he cannot escape. In any case, the production design gets high marks here and performances are reasonably well drawn out.

"'Bodies of Evidence' had a very distinctive production design to it," said Naren Shankar. "It's a showcase for our production designer, Steve Geaghan and his talents. He gave us a very cool space station and a very interesting courtroom. Melvin [Van Peebles] was a lot of fun on the set.

ting it on Earth, instead of on another planet, and throttling back the technological level to today, rather than the futuristic technology of the short-story—with [the] flying cars and so forth. So I could see they had to do it by budget. Other changes were made. Well, you know, that's the process—changes get made. And that's my feeling about 'Sandkings' and *OUTER LIMITS*. I think it's a very effective piece of television, and it works quite well on its own terms. I don't think it's my story by any means, I think there's important differences from my story."

One of those important differences between the print and TV editions of "Sandkings" is the fact that the *OUTER LIMITS* gave Simon Kress a family. Martin recalled the moment when he learned Kress would gain a family. "Richard Lewis called me...I recall him saying to me, 'George, we've got great news. We've got three generations of Bridges cast in 'Sandkings'—you know, we've got Beau Bridges as Simon Kress and Lloyd Bridges as the old man, and Dylan Bridges as the son. And isn't that exciting?' And I said, 'Well, that's terrific Richard, but you realize in my story there is no old man or son.' Personally, I don't really think a family was necessary, but...the Bridges are fine actors. Once they put in the parts, it's fine. Obviously, as the original writer I'm partial to the way the material in my original story is handled. And I don't think we necessarily needed the addition of all these other people."

In the *OUTER LIMITS* version of "Sandkings," Simon Kress is a husband, father and scientist on present-day Earth. Kress, studying Martian soil samples, has succeeded in raising alien insects from tiny eggs in the soil. After a laboratory accident, Kress is fired and his project shut down. Determined to press on, Kress steals a soil sample for a sand tank he has built in his barn. Astonished to find the insects showing signs of intelligence and building intricate sandcastles, he dubs them Sandkings.

"It's a story I wanted to adapt," said Lewis. "It would be a spectacular way to launch the show! We did 'Sandkings' like a version of *JURASSIC PARK*. Instead of dinosaurs, which were all CGI, we had these little bugs, also CGI. Everyone went, 'Wow. This is going to be a great script and we hope the bugs work!' That became the joke of the show.

“Everyone went ‘Wow. This is going to be a great script and we hope the bugs work!’ That became the joke of the show. No one had seen them.”

—Producer Richard B. Lewis—

No one had seen them. Everyone had to act and react to them. No one was quite sure, except for Pen [Densham] and me what they were going to look like. I was the only one that had confidence it could work. It was all done in computers here in Los Angeles. When we started the show, the director and Beau Bridges came to me and they both put their arms around my

shoulders, and they'd go, 'Richard, this is a great script. I hope you get the bugs right!' As we finished the show, the anxiety level started increasing with the studio saying, 'Richard, we hope you get the bugs right!'"

And to realize those bugs as realistically as possible, enough to terrify today's often cynical television viewing audience, was visual effects supervisor John Gajdecki. For Gajdecki, "Sandkings" was an opportunity to have fun. "We spent a lot of time working on the designs of the bugs," said Gajdecki, who came to the series after producing the visual special effects of four *TEKWAR* TV-movies. Designing the Sandkings, Gajdecki said, began with illustrations and sketches to see what would be interesting. "We rendered them as still frames in 3-D until we got a really good-looking bug. Simultaneously, we made some prosthetic bugs that were fully mechanized, and motorized—small puppet Sandkings." The design that finally emerged—that everyone liked—was making the little critters alien scorpions.

Although mostly rendered on the screen by CGI, the Sandkings were also realized in other ways for specific shots. The computer generated models were used for wide angle shots, while the puppet insects would be used for closeups. Even further, real scorpions were employed in a few shots, most notably Helen Shaver's nightmare immersion into a bathtub full of Sandkings. "Those were rubber toy scorpions, 50% with real

Visual effects designer John Gajdecki in his office at Vancouver's Bridge Studios. He supervised feature-quality effects for the pilot.





Bridges as scientist Simon Kress shows his son Josh the Martian insects he is studying and the exquisite sand castles they construct (left.)



scorpions.

As for the puppet Sandkings, Lewis said they were used as a closeup for two of some 400 special effects shots. "We witnessed the insects fighting each other head to head in these shots," said Lewis. "Honestly, I thought they looked horrible! I wanted to cut them out of the show but was asked by the network to keep them in because they thought [the puppets] worked. I thought the computer special effects worked better."

As the man who assembled all the film footage and edited "Sandkings," Michael Robison said that working on the 93-minute film was an opportunity to be reunited with his friend and colleague, director Stuart

Gadjecki's Sandking design in CGI. For the Martian insects a combination of real scorpions and hand puppets were used.



Gillard. They had worked together at numerous times in the past, notably the Canadian western series *BORDERTOWN*.

Robison turned director on episodes of Trilogy's sister series, *POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY*. He was impressed by the intensity of the actors and the chemistry on the set. "Beau was so 'into' the story," said Robison. "Bridges and Stuart Gillard had a great relationship in terms of getting a lot of good things happening. Actually, a lot of it happened in the last week, when Beau's son [Dylan] had finished with the show and his Dad [Lloyd] was finished and they were shooting most of the stuff in the barn. They really got into shooting [during] the back end of the show. They just were completely focused and it was a real example of how you can really make a lot of movie on the stage, building on a foundation of what's already filmed."

One of the first major creative suggestions that Robison handed to director Gillard was to keep the camera on lead actor Beau Bridges. "I said things are going great with Beau," remembered Robison. "He really understood and was inside of this mad scientist character. He'd played one before and he was really nailing this one. The performances were just fantastic."

As an example of film editing improvisation, Robison said that as he slowly built up the film into shape, culled from the week's worth of material, Robison realized that they would come short of the required running time target they were aiming for. "I said, 'Stuart, we're going to come in 10, 12 minutes under. We need, like, 18 more pages written.'"

The company initially discussed and explored a variety of scenes that could be shot to add

By the end of the shoot he had the whole crew singing with him. Melvin loved to sing and would get everyone else in the crew to go along as well!"



Orbiting Earth Station Meridian in "Bodies of Evidence," where crewmembers unexpectedly meet with the most horrifying deaths.

"I saw the edge of the world." —The priest

"When I take my daughter's hand, I'll become infected. Will someone take mine?" —Joshua Hayward to his neighbors

FEASIBILITY STUDY

★★★

#59, 5/09/97. Written by Joseph Stefano. Directed by Ken Girotti.

One evening, as Joshua Hayward (David McCallum), is in the midst of an argument with his daughter Sarah (Laura Harris) over her desire to marry her boyfriend (Tobias Mehler), the entire neighborhood in which they live is snatched by aliens into the night sky. As the residents of the neighborhood wake up in the morning, they soon realize that aliens have transported them to another planet so they can become slave laborers. Ultimately, if the human "feasibility study" is successful, the alien Triunes will return to Earth and use our planetary population as a source of slaves. As a result, Hayward and the neighborhood's denizens have a terrible decision to make.

"Feasibility Study" is a very special episode in this series, marking the return of writer/producer Joseph Stefano to the show that he produced in the 1960s, with a remake of a classic black and white episode. After two classic appearances in the original series, it's great to see David McCallum return to the series in another role, blurring distinctions between the two series editions. His presence and performance brings familiarity and provokes sympathetic emotions from the viewer. Joshua's relationship with his daughter Sarah mirrors reality and it's interesting to have that as a backdrop to their fantastic situation. Stefano's rewrite of his own classic episode allows director Girotti to create a more realistic neighborhood location than in the original episode (which looked like a studio backlot). We also see more activity with the neighbors, revealing the microcosmic community as they shudder in the realization of what's happened to them. Compared to other new *LIMITS* episodes, "Feasibility" has a larger scope in premise. The climactic conclusion is actually staged better than in the original episode.

"I think it was a great episode to remake!" exulted Naren Shankar. "It turned out very well. First of all, it was wonderful to have Joseph Stefano rewrite his original episode. He came by on the set actually. Joe had a great time! It was a big thrill for him because we have the money, the resources and the production to do the original story justice to a much greater extent than they

could have physically produced in the 1960s. It had a tremendous amount of relevance for today. Setting the thing in a gated community where people didn't know each other. It was a nice change, a nice venue to put it into. I think it really turned out well. It's a very satisfying episode." See sidebar, page 39.



Neighbors find their block surrounded by a protective force field in Joseph Stefano's "Feasibility Study," a '60s classic series remake.

"Showtime!"

—Donald Rivers

"Please stand by!"

"They're trying to take us off the air!"

—Donald Rivers and Dr. Avery Strong

A SPECIAL EDITION

★★★

#60. 5/09/97. Written by Naren Shankar. Story by Naren Shankar and Jonathan Glassner. Excerpts by Scott Shepherd, Sam Egan, Brad Wright, Naren Shankar, Chris Brancato, John Whelpley and David Braff. Directed by Mario Azzopardi.

Donald Rivers (Alan Thicke), an investigative television news reporter on the program "The Whole Truth," goes on the air with his most important broadcast ever: exposing government projects in secret human genetic experiments that includes cloning. Evidence is brought to him by Dr. Avery Strong (Bruce Harwood) who provides classified secret camera footage. Throughout the broadcast, those who want the truth kept from the prying eyes of the public, attempt to shut down Rivers' expose.

This episode marks the OUTER LIMITS' second "clips" show to save production costs. We see material provided from previous episodes as Dr. Strong's "evidence" of the government's secret activities. The segments are culled from the episodes "Last Supper," "New Lease," "The Voice of Reason," "Afterlife," "Dark Rain" and "Blood Brothers." Curiously, material from an episode not yet broadcast at the time this episode aired, "In Another Life," is also included. Cleverly, director Azzopardi inserts Harwood as Dr. Strong into footage he shot for "Afterlife" to add credibility to the characters' presence during those events.

As clips shows goes, this is a stronger, more compelling storyline than "The Voice of Reason." In fact, Glassner and Shankar have added specific links to the previous clips episode by making "Special Edition's" Avery Strong the brother of "Reason's" Randall Strong. Alan Thicke is well cast and performs convincingly as the news broadcaster as does recurring X-FILES actor Bruce Harwood who provides all the secret footage. Both are engaging and add a level of believability to the proceedings.

"Jonathan Glassner had, for some time, wanted to do an episode that took place essentially in real time, a report like documentaries," explained Naren Shankar. "I was assigned a clips show last year and as you might imagine, 'clips' shows are a difficult thing to come up with in an anthology series. It's not just a straight collection of episodes. In this case, I had looked at the season and said, 'You know, it just struck me that there's so many shows

more time, but for reasons relating to time and money, these ideas were abandoned. "Everyone was so pleased with Bridges' performance, that the decision was made to take advantage of this," said Robison. "So, about the second week I got him and the writer to extend the show by putting the camera right on Beau and he started doing these diary updates,"

Robison refers to a recurring element of the film when Kress videotapes himself using his son's video camera, recording the results of his studies with the Sandkings for posterity. "It was kind of the STAR TREK captain's log, you know? They were very engaging and really worked."

The most outstanding scene in "Sandkings" that embodies Beau Bridges' acting performance is a bathroom scene where Kress has banished his family from the house, has fed his boss Stockley to the insects, and has now been infected by a bite from one of them. Kress is spiraling quickly into demented madness and he regresses into an imaginary scene where he is accepting a Nobel prize for his revolutionary scientific work with the Sandkings. Bridges recites an acceptance speech, cuts off his ponytail, and cleans himself up for the imagined award ceremony. Photographically, the camera just sits with virtually no cuts, on Bridges' performance.

"That scene got the most controversy of all the scenes of the entire show!" said Robison. "When I saw the footage, I thought, 'This is engaging!' but I thought, 'Has Stuart lost his mind?' I had nothing to edit to. I had trouble trusting the material. I recognized there was a really great performance in the sense of madness you can see unwinding." But Robison was troubled by the fact that, as compelling and interesting as the moment was, it was too long at two or three minutes solid. Like the diaries, Robison revealed that this was a last-minute scene as well. "That was not in the script as far as I know," he said. He solved his concerns by trimming the scene as much as he could. The final result, said Robison, succeeds. "For a lot of people, that bathroom scene is their favorite in that show," he grinned.

According to the film's scoring composer, John Van Tongeren, the bathroom scene



Bridges becomes obsessed with the Martian "sandkings," who begin worshipping him as a god. Below: Bridges' ad-libbed mental breakdown.



inspired him to write one of his favorite musical cues. "The music that's being played there is very, very, odd," said Van Tongeren. "It's got a romantic sound to it...very discordant and extremely dark. Every time I see it, I think I succeeded in what my task was there. A perversion. Nothing sexual there, just dark. It's a very dark moment and it's very interactive with his speech. Although, when you watch the show, it is a subtle, not obvious, cue that's very active in its role."

Surprisingly, Van Tongeren reports that the dialogue in the scene was actually ad-libbed by Bridges. "I took a shot and ad-libbed to his ad-libbing and the majority of my writing was improvisation to his improvisation. When I saw [Bridges] at the premiere and told him that, he got a kick out of that. He said he was really receptive to that scene when he saw the final picture."

As for the future of George Richard Raymond Martin's novella *Sandkings* as a feature film, the author reports that the rights are still up for grabs. "I'd love to actually see my story filmed. You know, the way I wrote it, with the skimmers and the volcanoes and the...other characters who were in my story. It is available. Nothing is happening immediately."

Richard Lewis, on the other hand, doesn't have very much optimism of this happening in the near future. He fears that the television "Sandkings" has become so successful, that doing a feature edition would be, for now, repetitive. "I don't know how to do it any better," he said. "I think the only thing that one can consider doing is the scope of the story. We kept it pretty contained for television. Beau Bridges and Helen Shaver did an incredible job, so I don't know how to make it any more emotional."

For the last word on "Sandkings," MGM-TV president John Symes had this to say: "I will always have the greatest respect and will always feel strongest about 'Sandkings' because it was the first segment we did. The fact that the Bridges family were willing to commit to us, and go out and do two hours, and ultimately deliver what I think will be a piece of film that will hold up for years and years to come! I think 'Sandkings' will ultimately be, certainly, a classic episode!" □

ject. "We began talking and they wanted me to do the screenplay."

Stefano was initially reluctant to become involved in OUTER LIMITS again, said Densham, "but for this story and for us, he felt extremely stimulated. He felt this particular story spoke to him in a way that he can really address creatively. In fact, he wanted to take on writing the screenplay."

The next step for the two producers was to actually make some connections, and to do that, on October 2, 1996, they jumped on an airplane and flew north. "We went to Vancouver to introduce me to the people actually making the new series," recounted Stefano. "I hadn't been up there before. That was a truly wonderful day. I really had a great time. Very nice people. The show is in excellent hands all the way around."

Densham recalled the visit fondly as well. "We met with the writing team up there. We also gave Joe a tour of the whole facility [at The Bridge Studios] which we hadn't had a chance to do before. For him, it's a wonderful experience, and for me too, to just be there. We actually created a good bond with the new team and [with him] as well. I felt it important that they have a piece of Joe." And so, the bridge was built not with a new script but an old favorite.

Alan Brennert remarked, "I think they have succeeded well in creating an anthology series that appeals to a mass audience in a way that very few other anthology shows have done."

Leslie Stevens, who created and executive produced the original series said of the new show's success: "The television child has grown up. The child I thought I would be watching every inch, every moment, every detail. But since its so strong and so capable, I trust it to have a good life."

"The fact is they're doing four years and they may go on from there, because they know it is literally the goldmine of the future. People have to eat and sometimes being in the food business you usually get a huge audience that's eating your food. Now, people have this immense appetite."

“The television child has grown up. The child I thought I would be watching every inch... But, since it's so strong and so capable, I trust it to have a good life.”

—Creator Leslie Stevens—



In second season's "World's Apart," Astronaut Chad Willett crash lands into a strange alien sea on a distant planet.

and the consistency of creative contributions everyone has made has been astounding. It is steadily difficult work when you have to start with a blank page every week, and you have to come up with a whole new story with characters and setting to shoot it in. And that's where the feature film background of Trilogy [comes in], particularly the work of Glassner and Wright. They've made this show, on an ongoing basis, one of the best shows on TV."

THE OUTER LIMITS' shining beacon has become regarded by those at MGM/UA as the show that brought the studio back from limbo. "It's been one of the real thrills of my television life to be involved with this show," said Symes. "I'm thrilled that it's become such a fixture of MGM-TV. I'm thrilled for my friends at Trilogy. They've been able to take the opportunity to succeed like they have."

And, in a reference to the fact that series co-executive producers Jonathan Glassner and Brad Wright developed STARGATE

MGM-TV president John Symes is so pleased with the show's progress that he makes a surprising declaration. "I think the show can go on as long as the audience is willing to stay with us. The franchise is extremely untapped. I think there are many sources. I have absolutely no fears that the well is going to run dry when it comes to telling stories. I think the best is still ahead of us. I hope it's a show that goes six or seven years. Ultimately, at MGM, we hope this is a franchise which can expand into the movie side as well."

"I think the most incredible part of the success of the show, has been the consistency of the show. When you do an anthology, you might have a chance to get a few good episodes out of the pocket per year, but I can honestly say to everybody that there has been a rare exception where you haven't reached a plateau of satisfying the audience. I think the level

that dealt with a certain subject area that you could come up with a coherent story. I sat down and looked through the episodes and I constructed a plausible conspiracy theory based on the clips of the episodes we had. It was re-edited somewhat, out of context. We 'Forrest Gump-ed' a shot from another episode ['Afterlife'] and put [Dr. Avery Strong] into the episode.

"Fans know Bruce Harwood as Byers on THE X-FILES, which I thought was a funny thing anyway, as a Lone Gunmen conspiracy theorist and here he is as a source!"



Alan Thicke as the investigative reporter in "A Special Edition," third season's clips show that is surprisingly good for being a budget saver.

"First sign of alien infection and you're on your own!"
— Captain to Lieutenant Rosen

HEARTS AND MINDS

★★

#61. 2/6/98. Written by Naren Shankar. Directed by Brad Turner.

Five North American Federation (NAF) commando soldiers are ordered to infiltrate an enemy alien munitions plant. But along the way, second in command Lieutenant Rosen (Christine Elise) begins to have doubts about their mission and their target. With tempers flaring, Captain Taverner (Miguel Fernandes) tries hard to keep his team together. Sgt. Eldritch (Dylan Walsh) is anxious to shoot the alien bugs, Corporal Hawthorne (Vincent Gale) is shaky and green while Archer (Heather Hanson) assists as their tactical scout.

This episode is essentially the series' edition of an alien bug hunt, just in time to ride on the coattails of STARSHIP TROOPERS in movie theaters. Shankar's concept is a worthy OUTER LIMITS tale, a tense and exciting combat mission but the ensemble acting, the dark photography leave much to be desired. One giveaway that the aliens are not what they seem is when you realize the alien munitions plant that the commando team are covertly infiltrating looks like a human mining plant. There are steel guardrails and other human-related architecture that subtly indicate what's really going on.

"That was a good show," said Naren Shankar, the episode's screenwriter. "Brad Turner, the director, did a good job. We had a terrific cast. We had Dylan Walsh who is now on BROOKLYN SOUTH, Christine Elise from E.R. and BEVERLY HILLS 90210.

"I'll give you two anecdotes about this one: Every character's name in that show is named for someone in a Philip K. Dick novel!"

"We had the actor inside the alien suit walking backwards because we wanted to have a very alien look to the motion. It's to get a very strange look to motion. It was an interesting experiment. Whether or not it's successful is up to you to decide. It works sometimes. There's some real cool second unit stuff."

Christopher Nelson, a prosthetics makeup expert with Steve Johnson's XFX, Inc., crew, remembered this alien fondly. "We made an alien which was a guy in this weird bug suit. The guy in

continued on page 103

the suit actually walks backwards completely blind. We had extensions on him so he had these grasshopper arms and he would walk facing backwards. Eventually, they didn't use a lot of it, but just having him trying to walk around blindly, he was bumping into things, so it was crazy!"

Despite the fact that the bug alien during a shootout sequence was not seen on camera very much, XFX tries to maintain a standard of workmanship detail for practical reasons. "We try and make it as good as possible because when you walk on the set, you want to give them the option of closeup shots and angles," said Nelson. "If the director suddenly says, 'You know, it would be great to get a big closeup of this thing...' as a cutaway, then we want to be able to do that. We don't want to cut away and look at something and say, 'It's horrible!'"



Christine Elise is a commando in "Hearts and Minds," an alien bug hunt timed to ride on the coattails of STARSHIP TROOPERS.

"You can never be sure of anything. That's life."
—Kristin Fields to Mason Stark

IN ANOTHER LIFE ★★ 1/2

#62. 2/16/98 Written by Naren Shankar. Story by Naren Shankar, Brad Wright and Chris Brancato. Directed by Allan Eastman.

Rich and calm Mason Stark (Matthew and Mitchell Laurence), the CEO of Eigenphase Systems uses a dimension-hopping "Quantum Mirror" to snatch other versions of himself from parallel universes. A homicidal version of himself is on a rampage, killing his girlfriend and all of his closest friends. Blackmailed into helping his counterpart, a suicidal Mason Stark who is a mere project manager of Eigenphase in his world, reluctantly agrees to help in exchange for an opportunity to recapture a life with Kristin Fields (Kelly Rowan), the girl of his dreams. But the homicidal Stark has other ideas.

Not a new idea in science fiction, and in fact an entire sub-genre, it is so cleverly executed with good performances by the Laurences that the idea is almost fresh. Exploring parallel universes continues to be popular, as every episode of SLIDERS is totally devoted to the alternate dimensions and STARGATE SG-1 recently had their own take ("There But For the Grace of God").

The exteriors of the British Columbia Telephone corporate headquarters doubles here as the Eigenphase Systems building.

"There's a science fiction notion that there are infinite number of parallel universes," noted screenwriter Chris Brancato, who came up with the story idea. "Say you are, in a parallel universe, a horrible murderer, who's pursued hotly by the police in his universe. He figures a way to jump universes. There's technology that allows him to jump parallel universes. So your counterpart from the parallel universe comes here and starts to take over your life all the while being pursued by cops from his world following into this one. He takes over your life, he screws around, takes your money forcing you to have to try and regain your life from

OUTER LIMITS

TRIAL BY FIRE

Brad Wright's playwright roots shine in his second bottle show.

By Frank Garcia

Screenwriter Brad Wright describes "Trial by Fire" as a pressure cooker. Like his other bottle opus, "Quality of Mercy," this episode takes place almost entirely in a single setting. Wright said he loves writing these tension-stretching tales. It comes mostly from his roots as a playwright and his being a fan of nail-biting, sweat-inducing thrillers such as FAIL SAFE, the 1964 film starring Henry Fonda, and TWILIGHT'S LAST GLEAMING, the 1977 film starring Burt Lancaster.

"I'm a playwright first, and that's really the skill of a playwright to keep energy in a set where the characters never leave. I look for the motivation of the characters to be driving the story internally rather than externally," said Wright.

Newly elected U.S. president Charles Halsey [Robert Foxworth] won the election on the strength of his promise: "Let us be your friends." On the eve of his inauguration, Halsey and his wife Elizabeth [Diana Scarwid] are rushed to a secret bunker in Washington D.C. where they learn that a mysterious object, neither meteor nor comet, has entered the solar system at half light-speed on a course for Earth. When it explodes on impact with the dark side of the moon, the President and his staff are first horrified, then relieved. But their relief is shattered by the ominous news that the object was the herald of an armada of six extraterrestrial ships headed for Earth.

Wright was pleased that an actor of Robert Foxworth's caliber joined the show. "Every morning, I had a meeting with the President!" quipped Wright. "We'd go over the day's work and he'd have very expert insights about the script and we

would adjust things here and there. It made me realize just how smart his performance was. He was concerned about details. He was aware the whole thing had to have tension and that tension was in real-time and where the level of tension was in the performance. That's why he nailed it!"

Director Jonathan Glassner concurred about Foxworth's performance. "I thought he was great. I couldn't have asked for better actors. The whole cast was wonderful, which made my job easier as a director.

"He came in so 'into it' and prepared, to the point where he caught little things in the script—logic things—that didn't make sense, that we didn't catch, having gone through the script a dozen times. And he took Brad aside and said, 'You know, if I say this, this doesn't quite make sense with what happens down here.'"

"Brad would be like, 'I didn't even think of that!' Change it, rewrite it. And it was a pleasure, because he was thinking about every word, and every single thing he was going to say and what it all meant. And the cast, they were right on the money on it."

Wright says that President Halsey's continued insistence that his staff use "plain

Robert Foxworth as U.S. president Charles Halsey, facing the threat of an alien invasion on his inauguration day, in the second season drama scripted by producer Brad Wright.





Friend or foe; the decision facing the president in a tense drama directed by Jonathan Glassner that predated INDEPENDENCE DAY, makeup design by Steve Johnson's XFX.

English" is not a reaction against the proliferation of scientific jargon employed by other SF-TV shows. "I wasn't slamming STAR TREK consciously or unconsciously," said Wright. "I'm a big fan of STAR TREK.

"Having said that, the real reason I put that in, having [President Halsey] say, 'Put it in plain English!' [was] because English was the one thing they weren't looking for [from the aliens] in the end. Of course, the message was in English all along. They were saying, 'Let us be your friend,' which was [the President's] political platform. So 'Speak English!' he kept saying. But nobody was listening. That's exactly what the aliens were speaking. That's the real reason I put it in."

Filming an OUTER LIMITS on one soundstage for a week may sound like an easy task for any filmmaker, but the complications are in the details, as Glassner explained. "It was a tough episode to do, because basically we had five actors in a room, for an hour. And that's really hard to sustain. I made them do a lot of moving around, going up and down ramps, from control console to control console, just to keep it active. For an actor, that's a challenge, because they would rather just be in the moment, saying the lines, playing the emotions, than have a director say, 'By the way, while you're talking about being scared out of your mind, and worried about your kid out in the ocean who may be dead, I need you to run from this counter, up this ramp to this counter, and push this button,

“It was a tough episode to do, because basically we had had five actors in a room for an hour. And that’s really hard to sustain.”

—Screenwriter Brad Wright—

and then walk over here and look at the screen.' And these guys were all totally happy to do it."

Glassner explained that the key to this show's success—between Wright's script, the acting ensemble and his direction—came from carefully planning the construction of the bunker set. Being a producer on the show allowed Glassner to consult with the various production departments a month ahead of the actual shooting.

"I insisted that we have multiple levels—height—on the set," said Glassner. "And ramps and stairs and railings and things that the actors could play with and move around. That helped quite a bit. We also did about 75% of the show on Steadicam, which is something that's not usually done. I think the only show that I've seen it done on is E.R., actually, which does almost all its show on Steadicam. We did that to keep the show moving, so the camera's moving almost all the time."

The Steadicam is a camera stabilization device. When in the hands of a skilled operator, it combines the image steadiness of a dolly with the freedom of movement of a hand-held shot.

The second advantage of pre-planning is an opportunity to put some thought and care into the design of the aliens. "We have an initial concept meeting a good month, month and a half before the show's going to shoot," said Glassner. "Sometimes we don't even have a script, we just have an outline. We'll have a concept meeting via telephone—a conference call with our creature-effects guys in Los Angeles [Steve Johnson and some of his guys]—and we'll say, 'How can we be different this week, and not have your standard bug-eyed alien?' And we'll talk about various options and things, and then what they'll usually do is send us four or five drawings of choices, and we'll look at the drawings and say, 'Okay, we like this about this one, and this about this one and this one about this one—can you put them all together?' and they'll do another drawing and we'll make a few more refine-

a horrible scumbag version of yourself.

"When I left the show, I said, 'Here's the outline...' and they said, 'Okay, if we turn this into an episode we'll give you story credit.' I said, 'Cool. Whatever.' They took it from there. I'm sure it's a totally different thing."



On the Quantum Mirror, Mason Stark grapples with his homicidal doppelganger from a parallel universe, in Naren Shankar's "In Another Life."

"Mr. Brooks, do you feel like a winner today?"
—Michael Chen to Tanner Brooks

IN THE ZONE

★ ★ 1/2

#63. 2/20/98. Written by Naren Shankar. Story by Jon Povill. Directed by David Warry-Smith.

Tanner Brooks (Adrian Pasdar), an award-winning athlete in the Octal games, begins to feel he's losing his edge. But one day when a scientist, Michael Chen (Pat Morita), offers him unusual treatments to give him the fighting edge that he needs to continue winning, Brooks discovers that he's received more than he bargained for. After repeatedly stepping into Chen's biogenetic chamber, Brooks gains the ability of moving faster than any other athlete and in the process, he slides "in and out of a different Quantum Phase." Brooks' transformation frightens both himself and his loyal wife, Jessica (Claudette Mink).

In yet another story where experiments run amok, we visit the sports arena for a tale that explores some truths about the desperation and obsession that athletes have as they compete in brutal sports. For inspiration this story echoes the James Caan feature ROLLERBALL, but it more directly takes a premise from STAR TREK's "Wink of an Eye" and transplants it into an OUTER LIMITS framework. That is, someone who moves faster than normal, is capable of seeing the world in a standstill. High marks go to Mink as Tanner's loyal wife. Shankar gives her strong, truthful dialogue about the dangers of sports and athletics.

"On the day that we had a massive number of fight scenes and choreography, the wife of our director, David Warry-Smith, went into labor and he had to get off the set!" laughed screenwriter Naren Shankar. "That threw us into a bit of a tizzy. Our executive producer, Jonathan Glassner, had to come in and pick up the baton.

"David is from Toronto and his wife had come here with him. She was close to giving birth. It's one of those things where we laughed about it during prep, 'Oh! She'd probably go into labor right in the middle of the shoot!'

"And David said, 'No, no, noo!' And, of course, she did!"

When it comes to inventing a new, futuristic game, Shankar candidly admits that the task is not easy. "That script was a freelance story and I kind of inherited it. It had its problems. It's very difficult when you get into a situation where you're making up a game. It's a tough thing to pull off.

"I think that's a show where our ambitions were too high. I don't think those games come off as real. I don't particularly think ROLLERBALL came off as real. What you end up doing is sort of gimmick things up. You make up these rules and

you don't really have time to think them through well. There's a reason that boxing or wrestling have been around for such a long time. They're very simple and elemental. You just have a couple of people in the room fighting. That's about as simple as it gets.

"It was a difficult show to pull off. It had some nice moments. It was fun having one of the American Gladiators come in and play a part."



Adrian Pasdar and Claudette Mink are award-winning athletes in the futuristic Octal Games in "In The Zone," another experiment run amuck.

"Taking our child, that isn't right!"

—Shal to Brav

"You can't look after him the way we can."

—Vorak to Brav and Shal

RITE OF PASSAGE

★★★

#64. 3/13/98. Written by Chris Dickie. Directed by Jimmy Kaufman.

In the distant future, at a small human colony in the forest, a young woman, Shal (Emmanuelle Vaugier), gives birth. But the alien race overseeing the colony, the Vorak, take away the child from her. Distraught and upset by this doctrine, Shal convinces her mate Brav (James Marsden) to travel with her outside the colony and to the obelisk to be reunited with their son. Together, they head into the unknown alien world of the outside forest, encountering a variety of dangers, including snakes.

Surprisingly well done, this episode hits all the right notes that makes an exciting OUTER LIMITS episode: spotlighting strong human emotions and values placed in a science fiction context. In this particular case, the theme explored is simply the strong maternal instincts a woman has for her child. This basic, emotional impetus drives the story forward. In one moment, Shal tries to provoke paternal emotions from Brav, who's having difficulty finding feelings for the child. This is a commentary that male parents might not take too lightly!

Camille Mitchell, who appears in this episode as "Mother," a Vorak, also has a recurring role in POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY as Derek Rayne's sister. Mitchell is also the daughter of the late character actor Cameron Mitchell.

"This episode was our story editor Chris Dickie's last episode before he left to join DEADMAN'S GUN," said Naren Shankar. "If you look very carefully, there's a moment where they're picking human remains out of a glacier, and they put him in a box and there's a human head in the box? That's Chris Dickie. The frozen human head in this alien refrigerator, is in fact, Chris Dickie! It wasn't a mask. It's him made up to look frozen."

To explain why the aliens believed it was necessary to remove the child from this microcosmic human community, Shankar noted, "It was the fact that the aliens felt the humans were not capable of it. They hadn't learned enough or have any experience with raising the helpless and young. That's indicated in the teaser when the baby is born and the alien holds it up, and someone goes, 'What is it?' because they'd never seen it." □

ments, and then we lock it in. Then sometimes we'll say how much it's going to cost, if it's too much and we have to cut something else out of it." Communication between Vancouver and Los Angeles, acknowledged Glassner, is conducted by telephone and the fax machine.

To assist the actors in their performances, Glassner was very demanding in another area of the production. He insisted that all the special effects be completed and filmed, to be inserted into the view-screen monitors, in time for shooting. "Everyone thought I was crazy!" grinned Glassner. "Usually those sorts of things are done weeks after the show is shot, and they do what's called a 'burn-in' where they kind of overlay it over the screen. Like the old STAR TREK used to do—and to me it always looks fake. I wanted the actors to be able to interact with the actual image on the screen. Have them literally standing in front of the screen, on the same frame, and see it and not be reacting to an imaginary thing that's not really there—and having each of them reacting a little bit differently because they're all imagining. Luckily, we had the script long enough in advance, and because I was producing the show, I was here way before a director would normally be here, and we started designing the special effects in advance, and had them all built before we started shooting."

This created some havoc among the special effects designers, who were very used to doing it the other way around, as visual effects designer John Gajdecki explained. "'Trial By Fire' was a special case. Every episode of OUTER LIMITS had to be done first. You would design the effects, shoot the episode, go on the set and say, 'Okay, here we have a clean plate for 10 seconds for [example] the guy to beam in, to be eaten by the monster, or turn into another monster.' Then you go to post-production and they edit the episode, and you create the effects. In 'Trial By Fire,' everything played back on those monitors. That's a huge amount of work during the posts on other episodes."

To design the spaceships, visual effects supervisor John Gajdecki and company went out and bought modeling clay, coffee



Series producer and "Trial By Fire" director Jonathan Glassner in his Bridge Studios office in Vancouver. Below: Norad's satellite view of the alien ship.



sticks and spoons among other pieces of equipment and constructed 10 little models the size of a dessert plate. All the designs were then put on Jonathan Glassner's desk for judgment and approval. "Jonathan signed off on one which was the sloped wing [craft]," said Gajdecki.

With an alien spaceship design selected, a local computer special effects company constructed a detailed physical model, which was placed in front of the cameras and later composited with other elements that would make up the image of aliens arriving at Earth. "For a couple of days a week, we worked on the camera angle, the lighting, and [tried] to give it a telephoto feel," said Gajdecki, as the image would be trans-

mitting from an Earth satellite. "The ship was coming forward and we put other ships in the shot. The moon was a photo, courtesy of NASA. We took those and composited it in the background, [and] made up some stars..."

There are many similarities between INDEPENDENCE DAY and "Trial By Fire." Both films figure on the President of the United States and his reaction to Earth's first contact between humans and aliens. But any overlap in the material is purely coincidental. Writer Brad Wright disavowed any notion of stealing Dean Devlin and Roland Emmerich's ideas and injecting them into THE OUTER LIMITS. After all, "Trial By Fire" (and if you wanted to be facetious, you could retit it "Inauguration Day") aired on Showtime cable in March 1996, roughly two months before the premiere of INDEPENDENCE DAY.

"I had no idea! I'd written that long before I knew INDEPENDENCE DAY," grinned Wright. "After we shot the episode, a friend of mine called me from L.A. and said, 'Brad, I just read this script called INDEPENDENCE DAY. It's a lot like 'Trial By Fire.' And I went, 'Oh, no!' Jonathan and I were wondering what we could have done if we had another 10 or 15 million dollars!" he chuckled. "It's definitely a story that could have been a longer episode. We could have left them looking out of the Oval Office. I liked INDEPENDENCE DAY. But we tried a different approach to the story." □



Joseph Stefano with an XFX alien on the set of third season's "Feasibility Study." Stefano, the original series' producer and co-creator, has been retained as a consultant to the new series.

SG-1 for MGM-TV, Symes remarked, "I'm also thrilled that a lot of people we're working with on OUTER LIMITS are going to have the opportunity down the road to do other things with MGM television and grow with us as we go along. It has been our centerpiece from the beginning and will be our centerpiece for the future."

Pen Densham brushed away any suggestions that LIMITS is in danger of becoming repetitive. "I know our format is somewhat limited in certain ways but we still have alien planets, we still go to the future, we still have all kinds of environments. One has to guard against repetition, but in a very decisively optimistic way. That's why that challenge in the OUTER LIMITS bible is there to say 'Be prepared to make mistakes.'"

The final word on THE OUTER LIMITS comes from the man who serves as The

“People call me and they pretty much universally say ‘Wow! You really got a smart show! it’s really the best thing on TV!’ That is pretty damned rewarding.”

—Exec. Prod. Richard Lewis—

Overlord: Richard Lewis. "We do fables, parables. It's a great forum and that's what science-fiction is best at. It's part of literature. I'm very proud that somehow we've managed to fulfill the mandate of the original show. Kind of exceed on a qualitative, technical, and in many ways a writing level what they were trying to do originally. And we have

made an impact on an emotional level.

"People call me and they pretty much universally say, 'Wow! You really got a smart show! It's really the best thing on TV!' That is pretty damn rewarding. We're kind of the mouse that roared. We're a cable show, really competing with network television. I think we've created a really rich library of thought-provoking drama and science fiction that will be around for a long time.

"We started out by saying, 'Boy! I hope this show can go four, six or eight years. Boy, I hope we win awards.' You know, you don't think about that when you're starting out. I think you just hope you don't fall flat on your face! Don't embarrass yourself. You actually can achieve some level of quality, when you work on scripts, supervise the writing, rewrite some people, supervise the production [and hope] what comes out the other end has an impact. Emotional. Visceral. I have to say I was pleasantly surprised." □

Astronaut Matt Craven returns from Mars unknowingly carrying a lethal shape shifter in first season's "The Voyage Home."



EPISODE INDEX

| | |
|--|--------|
| AFTERLIFE, #36, 5/19/96..... | Pg. 63 |
| THE AWAKENING, #52, 3/14/97..... | 91 |
| BEYOND THE VAIL, #27, 2/09/96..... | 49 |
| BIRTHRIGHT, #20, 8/13/95..... | 42 |
| BITS OF LOVE, #44, 1/19/97..... | 82 |
| BLOOD BROTHERS, #3, 4/07/95..... | 27 |
| BODIES OF EVIDENCE, #58, 5/09/97..... | 96 |
| THE CAMP, #50, 2/21/97..... | 88 |
| CAUGHT IN THE ACT, #14, 6/23/95..... | 36 |
| THE CHOICE, #6, 4/28/95..... | 30 |
| THE CONVERSION, #12, 6/09/95..... | 34 |
| CORNER OF THE EYE #9, 5/19/95..... | 32 |
| DARK MATTERS, #11, 6/02/95..... | 33 |
| DARK RAIN, #49, 2/14/97..... | 87 |
| DEADMAN'S SWITCH, #55, 4/04/97..... | 93 |
| THE DEPROGRAMMERS, #37, 5/26/96..... | 70 |
| DOUBLE HELIX, #54, 3/28/97..... | 92 |
| FALLING STAR, #40, 6/30/96..... | 73 |
| FEASIBILITY STUDY, #59, 5/09/97..... | 97 |
| FIRST ANNIVERSARY, #28, 2/16/96..... | 55 |
| FROM WITHIN, #34, 4/28/96..... | 61 |
| HEART'S DESIRE, #51, 2/28/97..... | 89 |
| HEARTS AND MINDS, #61, 2/6/98..... | 99 |
| THE HEIST, #35, 5/05/96..... | 62 |
| IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK, #19, 7/30/95..... | 41 |
| I HEAR YOU CALLING #25, 1/26/96..... | 47 |
| IN ANOTHER LIFE, #62, 2/16/98..... | 100 |
| INCONSTANT MOON, #33, 4/12/96..... | 60 |
| IN THE ZONE, #63, 2/20/98..... | 101 |
| I ROBOT, #18, 7/23/95..... | 41 |
| LAST SUPPER, #47, 1/31/97..... | 85 |
| THE LIGHT BRIGADE, #39, 6/23/96..... | 72 |
| LIVING HELL, #8, 5/12/95..... | 32 |
| THE MESSAGE, #17, 7/16/95..... | 40 |
| MIND OVER MATTER, #26, 2/02/96..... | 46 |
| MUSIC OF THE SPHERES, #56, 5/09/97..... | 94 |
| THE NEW BREED, #16, 7/09/95..... | 39 |
| NEW LEASE, #53, 3/21/97..... | 91 |
| OUT OF BODY, #41, 7/14/96..... | 74 |
| PARADISE, #38, 6/16/96..... | 71 |
| QUALITY OF MERCY, #13, 6/16/95..... | 35 |
| THE REFUGE, #32, 4/05/96..... | 59 |
| REGENERATION, #46, 1/24/97..... | 84 |
| RESURRECTION, #23, 1/14/96..... | 45 |
| THE REVELATIONS OF | |
| BECKA PAULSON, #57, 5/09/97..... | 95 |
| RITE OF PASSAGE, #64, 3/13/98..... | 102 |
| SAND KINGS, #1, 3/26/95..... | 26 |
| SECOND SOUL, #4, 4/14/95..... | 28 |
| SECOND THOUGHTS, #45, 1/19/97..... | 83 |
| THE SENTENCE, #43, 8/04/96..... | 81 |
| SPECIAL EDITION, #60, 5/09/97..... | 44 |
| A STITCH IN TIME, #22, 1/14/96..... | 44 |
| STRAIGHT AND NARROW, #29, 2/23/96..... | 56 |
| STREAMS OF CONSCIOUSNESS, #48, 2/7/97..... | 86 |
| TEMPESTS, #52, 3/07/97..... | 90 |
| TRIAL BY FIRE, #30, 3/01/96..... | 57 |
| UNDER THE BED, #10, 5/26/95..... | 33 |
| UNNATURAL SELECTION, #24, 1/19/96..... | 46 |
| VALERIE 23, #2..... | 27 |
| VANISHING ACT, #42, 7/21/96..... | 80 |
| VIRTUAL FUTURE, #7, 5/05/95..... | 31 |
| THE VOICE OF REASON, #21, 8/20/95..... | 43 |
| THE VOYAGE HOME, #15, 6/30/95..... | 38 |
| WHITE LIGHT FEVER, #5, 4/21/95..... | 29 |
| WORLDS APART, #31, 3/22/96..... | 58 |

Emmanuelle Vaugler gives birth in the distant future in "Rite of Passage," but the child is taken away by the Vorak, an alien race that rules man.



POLTERGEIST THE LEGACY

**OUTER LIMITS' sister series
moves to the Sci-Fi Channel.**

By Frank Garcia

Demons, devil-helpers, lupines, ghosts, and disturbed spirits are just some of the dark forces that have breached into the physical universe and wreaked havoc upon this earth. Fortunately, their vengeance is squelched by Earth's elite defenders—an organization known as The Legacy—which has existed throughout the centuries, constantly vigilant of any supernatural disturbances throughout the world. After three successful seasons of battling the universe's darkness on Showtime cable, members of The Legacy will continue their adventures next year on the Sci-Fi Channel.

POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY Trilogy Entertainment's sister series to **THE OUTER LIMITS** opened its third year on Showtime with a major confrontation of an ancient, immortal evil that walks through the centuries. In the two-hour season opener "Darkness Falls," we witnessed The Legacy's confrontation with those black, bloodsucking creatures of the night—vampires! Written by former **FOREVER KNIGHT** writer and editor Michael Sadowski, "Darkness Falls" was **POLTERGEIST**'s second en-



Third season's "Stolen Hearts."



Sarah Strange as Justine in third season's premiere "Darkness Falls," a two-part vampire show directed by series co-producer Michael Robison.

counter with vampires, after a skirmish with one of their brood in the first season's finale, "A Traitor Among Us."

Noted series co-producer and "Darkness Falls" director Michael Robison, "When you ask 'What is the show is about?' Different people have different takes on it. Some say 'We're making ghost stories!' Others say 'No, we're doing stories about demons!' and yet others say, 'No, we're just doing stories about the dark side and tor-



Alexandra Purvis as Kat runs in terror from a Banshee (Allison Hossack).

tured souls.' The show is so many things to different people. We can do all of them. Vampires was just one of those things that was getting pitched lots."

Since 1995, faithful television audiences who tuned in Showtime cable on Friday nights after THE OUTER LIMITS (and in syndication from various independent TV stations across the country), have come to intimately know the lives of the stalwart Dr. Derek Rayne (Derek deLint) and his

dedicated companions, Alex Moreau (Robbi Chong), Nick Boyle (Martin Cummings) and Dr. Rachel Corrigan (Helen Shaver). Two seasons worth of fantastic, supernatural battles often cost its members deep physical and emotional scars. The Legacy mansion off the coast of San Francisco, at times, almost seemed to be a lightning rod for evil in the universe.

Co-executive producer Garner Simmons explained that the first season was a difficult startup

CO-PRODUCER MICHAEL ROBISON

"When you ask 'what is the show about?' Different people have different takes on it. The show is so many different things to different people. We can do all of them."

for all of the creative technicians on the show. It was a time when they were literally trying to find and build characters. "What we discovered was that in having five characters, one of which was a Catholic priest, we realized that if we kept the priest, then in order to make the stories work, we have to develop Catholic stories or Catholic elements to each story because his function doesn't play into a lot of what the series tries to do," said Simmons. "It was easier, basically, to pull the character out. It doesn't mean he isn't needed; just use him on an irregular basis."

For these reasons, young actor Patrick Fitzgerald only appeared occasionally as Father Philip Callahan throughout the first two seasons. "It was purely a matter of practical considerations. What it comes down to is you have 45 minutes to tell a story," said Simmons.

Although Michael Robison is currently POLTERGEIST's co-producer and occasional director, he made his name as a film editor. He was responsible for editing the OUTER LIMITS series premiere "Sandkings" which also stars Helen Shaver. In fact, Robison built his ties with POLTERGEIST when director Stuart Gillard, with whom he worked with on "Sandkings," also directed

POLTERGEIST's two-hour premiere episode. Grabbing a chance to work with Gillard again, Robison entered the Legacy's world with editing of POLTERGEIST's pilot.

With extensive credits in editing features, series, mini-series, and movies for television, Robison has slowly climbed the ladder to directing features (DEADLY SINS with Alyssa Milano), pilots (TRUE STORIES for Spelling Entertainment) and TV series (REBOOT, SWEATING BULLETS, 21 JUMP STREET and THE HITCHHIKER).

To prepare to direct "Darkness Falls," POLTERGEIST's third season two-parter, Robison sat down for a vampiric movie marathon. Over the last 75 years an estimated 189 vampire films have been filmed beginning with NOSFERATU in 1922, the first adaptation of Bram Stoker's DRACULA. Robison found his greatest inspiration in two contemporary treatments: Joel Shumacher's THE LOST BOYS (1987) and Kathryn Bigelow's NEAR DARK (1987).

Noted Robison, "After watching 15 vampire movies [I thought], 'Gee, this [POLTERGEIST] story is better than most of them!' NEAR DARK had so many great elements in it, even though a lot of the show didn't work. We borrowed especially

The Legacy ensemble: Patrick Fitzgerald, Martin Cummins, Helen Shaver, Derek deLint and Robbi Chong, fighting the supernatural forces of evil.





In "Light of Day," Legacy anthropologist Alex Moreau (Robbi Chong), gets infected and tries to convert former Navy SEAL Nick Boyle (Martin Cummins).

CO-PRODUCER MICHAEL ROBISON

"Sometimes in POLTERGEIST, with the special effects, you can't even see the character. They're sort of toning it down. Sometimes the genre gets a little too melodramatic."

from NEAR DARK in terms of how we kill off our vampires."

Robison praised series regular Robbi Chong for her performance in the two episodes. "Robbi Chong was right up for it. She did an extraordinary job. We'd hoped to work together last year on a show that featured her sister [Rae Dawn], ["Spirit Thief"] but they switched directors, so when this one came... we came to be in synch with what we wanted to do and I was surprised how enthusiastic all the actors and the crew were about jumping into a vampire show.

"The crew wanted to volunteer to be extras in it instead of do their job. You know, turn down the \$20/hour props job and be the \$6/hour stand-in. I realized, 'Geez, I would never be that big of a vampire fan...' but I started to see what everyone was enthusiastic about. And we were just coming up on Halloween so everyone was in the mood. A lot of sexuality comes out of it. It's an interesting area that has a lot of melodramatic situations. [Other filmmakers] over the years have learned to button down and keep really simple. Because if everyone is flying around, turning into bats, it's going to look really silly. But it seems to really bring out a lot of dark parts in people's characters."

Most memorable for Robison in filming these two episodes, were the seductive moments when the vampires bite. In one crucial scene,

Alex, who's already been bitten by a vampire, attempts to seduce and recruit her friend Nick Boyle. Robison explained that the scenes were initially rehearsed without and later with the false fanged teeth as well as blood. "That state of transformation, of change, threat and danger, whenever we were doing those kinds of scenes, it keeps everyone on edge and they seemed to have most fun with." Hilariously, in one moment during the shoot, Chong's fake fangs popped off, fell and cracked in two. Fortunately, a spare set was standing by.

Other fun moments in the filming of "Darkness Falls" were late night location shooting. "We were simulating some flying sequences of the Justine character swooping down," noted Robison. "The crane swoops down in her point of view flying down on Derek. That was a fun night. We went down to Stanley

Park and Derek's out there with his spear gun with a wooden stake, looking to shoot a vampire out in the woods. When he looks up, boom, we're flying down the crane. And we shoot a reverse of her and it looks like she's smashing down onto him. A 20-year old actress dressed in black lands on Derek deLint! It's dramatic, it's campy and melodramatic, at the same time it seems to be highly entertaining! Over the top! It's a genre like HALLOWEEN where you can afford to dress up. You can afford to be a little melodramatic and still do a great show."

According to co-executive producer Garner Simmons, "I think this is a story that will surprise a lot of people. It's really an extraordinary story." He went on to say that the producers' goals in the currently airing third season are to focus with greater depth into the lives of our intrepid characters.

"Basically, we've done a show that's unlike most shows on television," said Simmons. "It's highly romantic, fairly gothic. It's an attempt to do television in a way that normally isn't done. This has a 19th century quality to it. The characters exist in a level which is intellectually interesting and challenging at the same time we want to get inside those characters and what

makes them tick. It allows the audience to plug into the stories on an emotional level. As we drive into the third season, our attempt will be to do more and more character-driven stories. If you look at the problems for the people who do this kind of thing, it's part of their daily life. It's a kind of loyal commitment they made and [we see] how it interfaces and interferes with the lives they're trying to lead."

Third season shows involved a teacher and a student, Green Beret soldiers and Rachel Corrigan fell spell to an evil spirit. Noted Robison of the new direction, "It seems to be in response to the audience and the studio creatives down at L.A., 'Let's get some more character-driven stories!' We're killing ourselves with all this money on these [special effects] gag shows. And sometimes you know what? The audience sits there and they go, 'HUH?' Everyone in the production spends a lot of time and money for all those fantastic [special effects] shots, but yet all the audience yearns for is those really compelling stories that puts our characters right at the center of [the spectacle] rather than just watch and be carried along by guest stars."

The third season saw two castmembers directing episodes. Actor Martin Cummings made his directing debut with "Irish Jug" while actress Helen Shaver stood behind the cameras and contributed skills honed from an OUTER LIMITS episode she directed during that series' third season, "Last Supper."

A new face appeared on the doorsteps of the Legacy mansion. A young Canadian actress, Kristin Lehman, joined the show as Kristin Adams in a recurring role. Lehman filled a void left by Emmy-winning actor Daniel Travanti, who played Legacy leader William Sloan, who

Vampires Chad Todhunter (l) and Anthony Palermo order Chong to dispose of Cummins in "Light of Day," the conclusion of third season's "Darkness Falls."



POLTERGEIST THE LEGACY

CREATING THE PILOT

Trilogy producer and series creator Richard B. Lewis on turning the movie into a TV franchise.

By Robin Brunnet

The producers of POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY were acutely aware how easy it is to deliver a bomb instead of a bouquet; their series, after all, comes from a now-defunct film franchise. "We were doing year one of LIMITS when MGM approached me with the idea of turning POLTERGEIST into a series," recalled executive producer Richard B. Lewis, one of three partners in Trilogy Entertainment Group (Pen Densham and John Watson are his colleagues; together they boast an impressive series of credits, including BACKDRAFT and BLOWN AWAY). "I thought they were nuts. What would we do, have Jobeth Williams and Craig T. Nelson move into a new house every week?"

The answer was to do what FRIDAY THE 13TH: THE SERIES attempted: milk the potential audience draw of the franchise's title for all it is worth, and concoct an entirely new story concept. For this, Lewis relied on his background as a university anthropology major. "The supernatural is not my cup of tea, but I thought about its historical roots, how man's understanding of it came about," he recalled.

Lewis created a would-be his-



Ghostbusters: (r to l) Robbie Chong, Martin Cummins, Derek deLint, Patrick Fitzgerald and Helen Shaver, an eclectic group that pledge their lives in humanity's defense.

tory where having a sixth sense used to be normal. "As time went on, socialization gradually robbed man of these powers. But the supernatural is no less potent today, still with us and wreaking havoc," he said. "With this groundwork laid, I fashioned a premise. What if there was a group of people who never lost touch with their powers? They

and their successors would form a tightly-knit group like the freemasons, and go about dealing with paranormal activity in secret. They grow wealthy and powerful, and assume the guise of charitable societies like the Pew Foundation. Their headquarters are mansions and museums, and they are the sole individuals preventing us from being

taken over by sinister forces." Officials at MGM and Showtime lost no time greenlighting this revamped version of POLTERGEIST. There was little doubt Trilogy would film POLTERGEIST in Canada—on the same Bridge Studios lot that OUTER LIMITS inhabits. "It's worked out quite well," said production designer Sheila Haley. "OUTER LIMITS has two studios, and so do we, plus a small commercial stage. Together we've taken over the entire complex!"

Unfortunately, producers have not avoided troubles endemic to shooting in British Columbia. The pressure to find unfilmed portions of Vancouver is intense because location-heavy series like X-FILES, OUTER LIMITS and others dominate the landscape. "It's a real headache," said Lewis. "And let's not talk about getting a good crew. We had to hand-pick ours. Vancouver is very, very busy, but you can't compare it to L.A. in terms of resources."

There is also bureaucracy to deal with, as POLTERGEIST discovered while filming a portion of the pilot in nearby Victoria. No sooner had electrical equipment been unpacked than a city inspector threatened to halt production because the gear

lacked Canadian Standards Association stickers.

Famous is the story of how unionists forced Clint Eastwood out of the province to neighboring Alberta to film UNFORGIVEN, because teamsters demanded that they, instead of a long-time colleague, drive the star's private trailer full of prop guns—which were also subject to bureaucratic red tape.

High costs coupled with bad attitude have compelled other prestigious features to seek greener pastures. Today, Vancouver plays host largely to TV movies. "It's not even ideal for television anymore," said a POLTERGEIST staffer who wished to remain anonymous. "It rains all the time, and there really isn't the diversity of locations people are led to believe. If it weren't for the exchange on the U.S. buck, we would be in North Carolina or Los Angeles quicker than a jack rabbit with a hand grenade up its ass."

POLTERGEIST's two-hour pilot began filming on Halloween, and wrapped in mid-December. Lewis, who co-wrote the script, enlisted key talent from the award-winning LIMITS pilot "The Sand Kings," including director Stuart Gillard and star Helen Shaver. Initially, Lewis doubted the veteran film actress would agree to do a series. "But we enjoy a good rapport, and she liked our ideas. Plus we pay her well, and two years of steady work is nothing to sneeze at."

The Canadian-born Shaver is no stranger to Vancouver. "She has family there, she knows the place, and I don't think she'll have much trouble spending eight months of the year there," Lewis mused.

Shaver plays Rachel Corrigan, a psychiatrist who journeys to Ireland to visit the grave of her recently-deceased husband. Through a bizarre series of events, he is resurrected by dark forces, and proceeds to seduce her. The result is a demon fetus with an astonishingly fast growth rate. Rachel's ordeal puts her in contact with "The Legacy," a group of paranormal investigators working from a mansion on San Francisco's Angel Island.

Led by Derek Rayne (Derek de Lint, of SOLDIER OF ORANGE fame), the group travels to Ireland and discovers that

EXEC. PROD. RICHARD B. LEWIS

"We have a budget 50% less than that of X-FILES. I challenge anything they're doing, whether it be the story, acting or effects... The final product looks great."



The savvy partners of Trilogy Entertainment (r to l), Pen Densham, John K. Watson and Richard B. Lewis, on the set of 1991's ROBIN HOOD; PRINCE OF THIEVES, now moguls of horror, fantasy and science fiction on television.

demons are using ancient sepulchers to achieve physical incarnation. The idea of a secret organization doing battle "with things that science cannot explain and religion chooses to ignore," as actress Shaver cheerfully informed on-set visitors, has spooky promise.

Indeed, a stroll through the JUMANJI-sized Angel Island mansion, which takes up an entire soundstage and was built by production designer Ian Thomas, amply reflects the foreboding mood the series may impart. The sprawling set has numerous banquet-sized rooms and catacombs of corridors and staircases. Oak paneling glows in golden pools of light, the ornate furniture really does seem museum-quality, and only the T-shirted technicians hurrying to and fro shatter the illusion the mansion houses a group of grimly-determined ghostbusters.

Sheila Haley, who assumed Thomas' duties after the pilot wrapped, noted the challenge of bringing POLTERGEIST to life is in the details. "Doppelganger," a first season show set in Egypt,

required lots of authentic looking artifacts and a mummified cat. Noted Haley, "We spent all our time pouring through historical books to get a specific prop to look just right—such as scrolls bearing a credible-looking ancient language for an episode called 'The 12th Cave.'"

Besides her devotion to the minutiae, Haley and her four person staff must also deal with the usual volume of set construction within their hectic seven-day-per-episode schedule. To wit: a cave in the basement of the mansion accessed "through a cleverly-designed series of doors and bookcases. It sounds simple, but it takes forever to get something like this to look clever on-screen."

With OUTER LIMITS sharing the same studio lot, there's hardly enough room left to build the sets, let alone make them look clever. "We use the special effects stage for carpentry," Haley laughed.

For different reasons, POLTERGEIST's visual effects are as challenging as production design. Noted Santa Monica-based

effects coordinator Elan Soltes, who also supervises OUTER LIMITS in a rotating schedule with another Californian coordinator: "It's a nightmare trying to avoid people's expectations about what ghosts should look like. We're doing our best to avoid cliches, and also effects that look computerized." Soltes, who did the effects for the LOIS & CLARK pilot, helped provide 60-70 effects shots for the POLTERGEIST pilot; subsequent episodes will boast several dozen computer generated effects apiece.

Soltes is not "a super fan of horror," but one genre film he admires and is drawing inspiration from is the 1964 Robert Wise classic THE HAUNTING. "It was scary as much for its use of sound and stillness as for its effects," he recalled. "So our rule of thumb is less is more. We want to get the mind's eye working."

In fact, the bulk of Soltes' computers are kept busy "sketching out matte elements and pre-visualizing effects. It's an enormous time-saver. Plus, everything on this series is filmed digitally to take into account the advent of high definition television. Computers have really become practical tools instead of glitzy effects toys."

Now that POLTERGEIST has become a TV institution, Lewis chuckled at the thought of becoming TV's King of Fright. "I grew up having the crap scared out of me in the movies, but I never thought I'd be working my damndest to scare others."

POLTERGEIST, he noted, went through its fair share of production woes (what he won't say, other than to suggest they were crew-related), and continues to be a tough act to pull off. "Our goal is to make this a big, scary, classy ride. We pay the crew generous wages, because there's no doubt filming this is painful."

Added Lewis with a noticeable trace of pride, "We have a budget 50% less than that of X-FILES" (which, incidentally, clocks in at almost \$2 million per episode). "I challenge anything they're doing, whether it be the story, acting or effects, with what we're doing. The final product looks great. In fact, we even have a cult following of our own." □

paid the ultimate price in his battle against evil in last year's episode "Trapped." "She comes to this House from the Boston House," remarked Simmons. "She's a bit mysterious. She's going to be an interesting character and we'll see what develops over the course of the year. We think this is a way to grow. As she interfaces with each of the [cast] characters, we'll get a chance to see other sides of them as well."

Lehman is a Canadian dramatic actress who has frequent television appearances. She's had guest roles in *THE OUTER LIMITS*, *PSI FACTOR*, *FOREVER KNIGHT*, and a recent *EARTH: FINAL CONFLICT*. She's also had leads in the films *DINNER AT FRED'S* and *HEMOGLOBIN*.

Revealing his perspective of the series' growth, co-producer Robison remarked, "I think there was a lot of great episodes and what we find is we're always trying to balance what we think is a great episode and what the audience thinks is a great episode. We're always very surprised."

"The stories used to be a lot more incomplete than they are right now. A lot more sizzle and dazzle and they sort of started off and they just didn't make sense when you got to the end. A lot of the shows in the first season there were a lot of ghosts and, 'Gee whiz, we ought to check it out!'"

But in the currently airing third season, Robison noted that examination of the consequences will be addressed, "There's a lot of more soul-searching about what some of these things mean."

"Sometimes in *POLTERGEIST*, with the special effects,



Chrystal Chappell in third season's "Dream Lover," enchanting *Legacy* member Martin Evans to death (r), a Minoan demon god on the prowl.

you can't even see the characters. They're sort of toning it down. Sometimes the genre gets a little too melodramatic. One writer was often fond of saying, 'We're making drama around here, not melodrama!' That's continually the line.

"And it's very difficult for actors and that comes into what I do. They get into these hysterical situations and sometimes is it laughable or is it, 'Oh my god! This is unbelievable! It's a torture situation, I'm faced with an evil spear and a dark presence.'

"But now, there's a core following because the writers have gotten the characters they're writing for and what the relationships are. I think there's an audience that follows the show



because the characters do make sense. To them, our strongest shows are where our male leads are doing something heroic. Our female guest stars [also] do really well. Helen Shaver, when she's featured, those shows do really well."

Robison noted that cast and crew returned to the show third season with renewed enthusiasm. As anyone who's been in the business knows, participating in the production of a one-hour dramatic television series requires the highest personal commitment.

"The cast is in good shape. When you start a season, usually everyone acts like they've come back from summer break," grinned Robison. "In show business it's great to come back to a job, you know? You finish a job, you ask, 'Oh, what am I doing the rest of my life? I

really don't know!' You come back with a lot of renewed enthusiasm and goals.

"I think Helen Shaver, for instance, is expanding her directing career. That's why it seems she's not in the episodes as much. I think it's fair to say that Martin Cummings and Robbi Chong have grown incredibly. Robbi, especially, is the most improved actor and Martin just finished a show that's extraordinary work.

"They're the junior players as the episodes usually go. While they contribute emotionally, Helen Shaver's character, Derek deLint's character seems to carry the ball there. They're the most experienced actors. They've been doing it not for five years but 20-30 years.

"Derek's excited about it. They're all passionate about it. They know their characters a lot more, are more professional." □

Helen Shaver as *Legacy* psychiatrist Rachel Corrigan with daughter Kat, part of a third season focus on character-driven stories to explore the ensemble.



STARGATE

MGM's sci-fi sister to THE OUTER LIMITS for Showtime starts its second season.

By Frank Garcia

It's a strange coincidence how OUTER LIMITS producer Jonathan Glassner and colleague Brad Wright became the producers of MGM's STARGATE SG-1 (which began its second season June 26.) "Brad and I, without talking to each other, independently saw that STARGATE was an MGM movie," said Glassner. "Both of us went to [MGM-TV president] John Symes separately and said, 'You know, STARGATE would make a great series! If you do it, I want to be involved!' Symes replied, 'That could happen.'"

Intrigued with the challenge of creating STARGATE as a series platform, Symes flew to Vancouver, Canada where Wright and Glassner were occupied with THE OUTER LIM-

ITS, and sat down to discuss the possibilities.

With Glassner and Wright, MGM-TV had two experienced producers who also specialized in writing and directing. MGM acquired the rights of the property, encouraged by the pair's strong interest and excitement about STARGATE's potential.

On February 18, 1997, on a gigantic soundstage at Bridge Studios in Vancouver, Canada, veteran OUTER LIMITS director Mario Azzopardi barked "Action!" Production had begun on Glassner and Wright's two-hour pilot, "Children of the Gods."

To make sure that their new universe was constructed according to their vision, Glassner and Wright recruited Richard Hudolin, who worked on such SF genre films as TIMECOP and last year's Fox TV movie of

the week DOCTOR WHO. In 1993 Hudolin worked as a production designer, with writer/producer Kenneth Johnson on the movie of the week SHERLOCK HOLMES RETURNS. He was also an art director on director John Badham's STAKEOUT films.

As the STARGATE series production designer, Richard Hudolin's job is to turn the writer's detailed descriptions into three-dimensional physical objects that will be seen throughout the series.

For just the two-hour pilot alone, Hudolin and his team were asked to design and construct a gigantic cavern wall that contains important hieroglyphics, an Egyptian Royal Chamber, and a recreation of the Abydos Gate set, which was barely even seen in the feature film. Hudolin is also responsi-

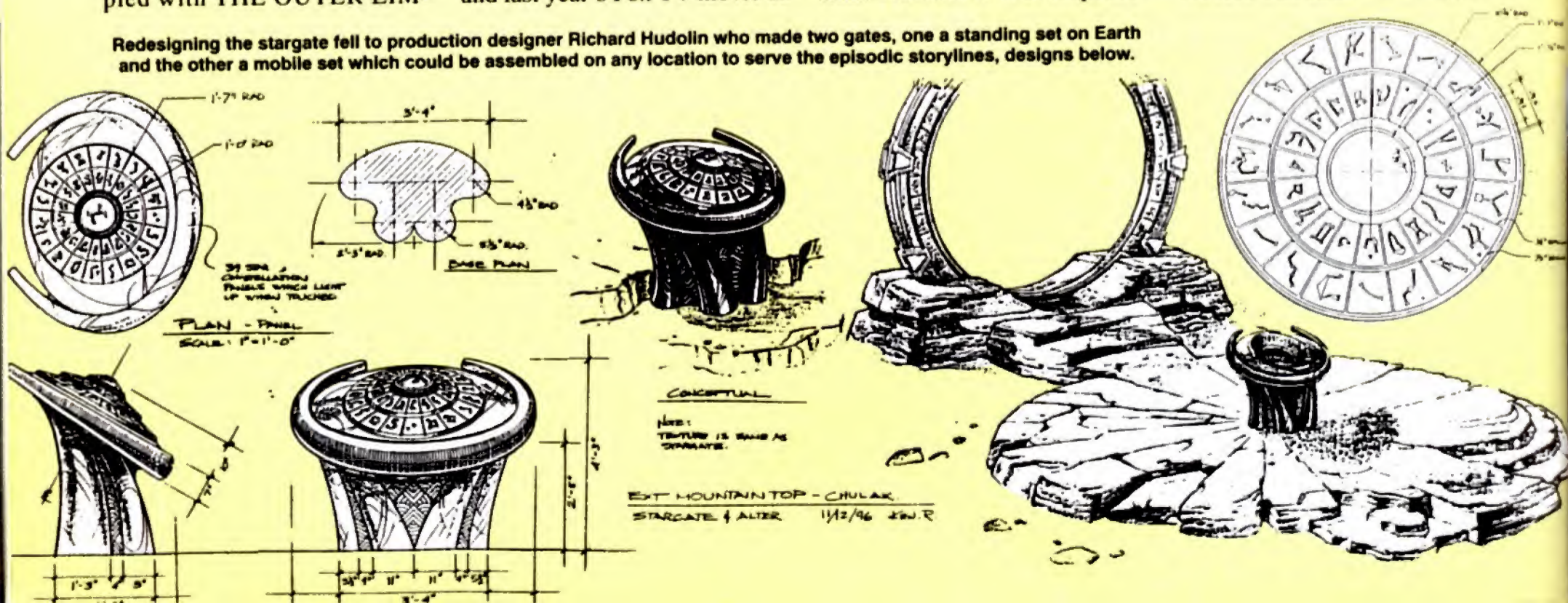
ble for smaller props like a nuclear bomb, a wrist radio transmitter and a cargo dune buggy.

The grand spectacle of the feature gave Hudolin a high standard to follow on just a television series budget. His task is probably more difficult than the feature's production designer because of the television audience's high expectations.

But even with an army of carpenters and a talented art department to support him, Hudolin's most difficult task was still to come: He still had to construct the Stargate itself.

According to executive producer Jonathan Glassner, Hudolin and his team built a full-sized, quarter-million dollar, fully-functional Stargate. That's not to say that the Gate will actually send you into another galaxy. But it does mean that directors can film the Stargate's

Redesigning the stargate fell to production designer Richard Hudolin who made two gates, one a standing set on Earth and the other a mobile set which could be assembled on any location to serve the episodic storylines, designs below.





Michael Shanks as Daniel Jackson and Amanda Tapping as Dr. Samantha Carter at the controls of STARGATE SG1, starting its second year September.

DESIGNER RICHARD HUDOLIN

“The scripts are really good. It’s a matter of the design and knowing where to put the detail to get the feeling and the effect of the film. It’s a high standard.”

Hudolin refers to an “iris plug” that was created by the military to prevent the Gate being used by aliens from other worlds who might want to invade the Earth.

The main attraction of the Stargate will, of course, be the computer generated special effects of a gigantic water funnel exploding from the Gate and providing travelers with instant, toll-free galactic transportation.

What’s also new to the series, is a “dial home console” which will be seen with all the Stargates on alien worlds. (On Earth, the console was never found, so the U.S. military uses high-tech equipment to jury-rig the thing.)

When he began work on developing the series, Glassner noted that he discovered many “holes” and inconsistencies that were not explained in the feature. “There was no explanation, at the end of the film, how Jack O’Neill and his team activated the Abydos Stargate and went home,” said Glassner.

In the film, archaeologist Daniel Jackson was in constant search for a “seventh symbol” which he needed in order to complete the string of symbols representing the coordinates that would return them home. When he finally discovered the aliens’ symbol for Earth, there was no explanation how he used this information. So Glassner and Wright invented a Stargate control console that allowed travelers to “dial in” the coordinates of their destination.

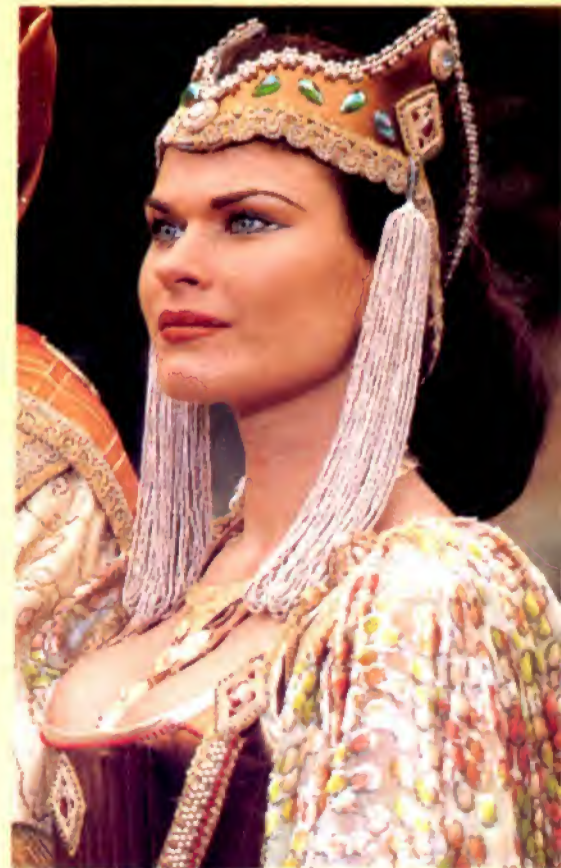
The job of designing the console fell to Hudolin who mused about what such a console would look like. “There has to be a context. It has to relate to each other. It can’t be a totally different design. You have to take into account the history of the film, the markings of the Stargate itself and how the Stargate relates to what we

call the ‘dial home’ device. Ultimately we got something that you can get a great shot at different angles. When you’re behind it...there’s visual connections between the markings on the dial home device and what’s on the Stargate. We’re talking about visual integration from a distance.”

Hudolin summed up his challenge on the series, “The scripts are really good. It’s a matter of the design and knowing where to put the detail, to get the feeling and the effect of the film. It’s a high standard. I’ve got great people to get that look and achieve that look. I’ve got great crews and producers who understand where we should be putting the money.

“I get ideas from everywhere. I can mix ‘n’ match architectures through the ages. There are no bounds in terms of what I can do or not do. If someone says, ‘That wouldn’t be right!’ How do you know what another world looks like?” □

Valtaire Bandera as Sha’re, Jackson’s Abydos wife, kidnapped and forced by the evil Apophis to be his consort.



dialing sequence and lights operating as if it was real.

Because the series was guaranteed for 44 episodes, it was cost-effective for the production to create large, elaborate Stargate ring. It stands 23 feet tall and is 20 feet in diameter. It’s an active, kinetic set model that will be used in every episode. The prop provides directors with a greater flexibility in integrating the Gate with the dramatic moments that it is featured in.

“We changed bits of the concept of the Stargate,” revealed Hudolin. “In the movie the chevrons would click-click, click-click and stop. Our version, on the 12 o’clock position, it’s click-click and the wheel spins and one of the chevrons lights up. It turns and goes the other way and it goes click-click and another light comes up. It’s

more of a visual interaction.”

An identical, second Stargate was also constructed so that the company could bring it to locations as the destination Stargate on alien worlds. For example, in the two-hour premiere, we see the Gate as a Stonehenge-like monument smack in the middle of a forest on the planet Chulack, where O’Neill and his team attempt to find Daniel’s wife.

The special effects that we’ve come to associate with the Stargate are very similar to the feature film, said Hudolin. “We created a lot of our own. We have a visual special effects department to deal with that. We strayed a little bit from some of the design of the Stargate. We haven’t exactly duplicated it. We added a disk to block people coming through the Gate.”

Setting up the mobile stargate set for filming in Vancouver. The quarter million dollar set stands 23 feet tall and 20 feet in diameter and is fully functional.



SLIDERS

Universal slides Fox's cancelled SF show into a berth on its own Sci-Fi channel.

By David Z.C. Hines

As anyone who follows television knows, the majority of series die early on. SF and fantasy shows, in particular, have a high casualty rate. But if most shows die in the great war with the ratings, there are a few weathered veterans. And every once in a while comes a regular hopping vampire—a show that seemingly can't be killed.

Case in point: the alternate-worlds adventure *SLIDERS*, which has been resurrected yet again by the Sci-Fi Channel. New episodes began airing last June (moved from January in order to maximize its ratings against the networks' summer reruns). While this latest resurrection is probably the most surprising of the several *SLIDERS* has experienced, its whole life has been a series of such breaks.

"*SLIDERS* was a show that really accidentally got on the air to begin with," said David Peckinpah, executive producer and the sole veteran on the *SLIDERS* writing staff. "They made a pilot that nobody liked at Fox. They ran the pilot; the pilot did good numbers, which shocked and surprised them; they then put the show on two seasons as a midseason show to very lackluster numbers. But, because they had had decent luck with it in certain time slots, and it did well in its demographics and tested better than shows they would put in behind it—or they would pull it off and put something else in which would do worse—it kept coming back on. The fact that it



Jerry O'Connell and Cleavant Derricks (r) in the Sci-Fi Channel's fourth season opener "Genesis," a return to an Earth Prime overrun by the Kromaggs.

stayed on the air as long as it did, I think, is miraculous."

While *SLIDERS* did win a following during its first season, it proved a controversial show within fandom (in large part because lauded fantasist George R.R. Martin had pitched *DOORWAYS*, a series with a nearly identical premise, to Fox the season before, see page 117) and never won a huge audience. The second season was more

frustrating than the first, as Fox restrictions on the show proved chafing for co-creator and executive producer Tracey Torme. Torme had some ambitious plans for the show, including the introduction of some long-term storylines; but Fox nixed his idea, arguing that *SLIDERS* should be a traditionally episodic show. According to Torme, Fox even wanted the cliffhanger that ended the first season to be

ignored entirely, and only grudgingly agreed to give him a few minutes of screen time to resolve the cliffhanger.

Matters only got worse in the third season.

"Well," Peckinpah explained diplomatically, "Fox executives were very supportive but very unclear about what it was they wanted the show to be. They knew what it had been wasn't something they were interested in continuing with; they felt it only appealed to the sci-fi audience, which the numbers seem to bear out is a small but dedicated share group... But Fox was interested in expanding and getting more people into the show, which they felt would be accomplished by making it more of a fantasy adventure show and less the pure sci-fi."

Whose idea was it to make scripts by shamelessly haircutting movies like *SPECIES* and *ANACONDA*?

"That would be Fox."

The third season didn't live up to Fox's ratings hopes. In addition, it was a critical flop, especially among long-time fans of the series. Even detractors of *SLIDERS* had to admit that they'd rather watch the first and second seasons than the third; some cynics even made unfavorable comparisons to *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*, along the lines of, "*VOYAGER*'s bad, but at least it's not *SLIDERS*."

And then the walk-outs began. Co-creator Robert K. Weiss had effectively left after the first season; during the third season, Tracey Torme took a reduced role, then left the series



Derricks in "Slidecage," in Kromagg hands on a hellish alternate Earth, using abandoned sets from TIMECOP and costumes from WATERWORLD.

entirely. The famously diplomatic Cleavant Derricks ("Rembrandt") and Jerry O'Connell ("Quinn") expressed dissatisfaction with the series' direction. Series regular John Rhys-Davies ("Arturo"), who had complained vociferously about script quality from the beginning, left the show. His replacement Kari Wuhrer ("Maggie") failed to win a fan following, perhaps because more screen

time in the third season was devoted to showcasing her breasts than developing her character. (The printable nicknames with which the fans dubbed Wuhrer included "Dangerbunny" and "Woo-woo.") When Sabrina Lloyd ("Wade") elected to leave SLIDERS at the end of the season, many fans threw up their hands in despair.

The prospect of having to build on such foundations might

Sabrina Lloyd and Jerry O'Connell in second season's "Dinoslide," on an Earth where the dinosaurs survived to be a protected species, CGI by Digital Muse.



“The third season was no longer about the quest to find a way home,” said Chris Black. “It was about eye candy, looking at Kari Wuhrer in seductress mode.”

inspire many producers to do the same. The third season, noted new executive story editor Chris Black, “was no longer about their odyssey, and this quest to find a way home, it was just about eye candy. ‘The Breeder’ is a great example, because it was all about looking at [Kari Wuhrer] in this slinky seductress sort of mode and it was about just trying to garner people to watch the show, which I think was the wrong approach to take. We’re going to try to sort of get away from that, and just write what we think is good for the show and good for the characters. And we hope people will appreciate that and want to tune in to see that,” pointing to the series’ new lease on life which begins on the Sci-Fi Channel.

SLIDERS’s staff faces the daunting challenge of breaking new ground and winning back their old audience. They’re looking forward to it.

The rescue by the Sci-Fi Channel was facilitated by the relationship between the Channel and its until-recently-director Universal (SFC is now owned by HSN, but is still connected to Universal), a relationship that also promises to benefit SLIDERS with creative freedom that the series has not enjoyed until this point. “Being with Sci-Fi now, and the complete freedom and content they’re giving us,” Peckinpah explained, “we can really get in to do some much more cerebral kinds of stories and not so much the run-and-jump action. I mean, we’ll want some of those because Universal has the vested interest in the foreign sales on the show, but we can also take some time out to do some of the more quiet, reflective shows as well, which will be fun.”

Those “more quiet, reflective shows” will also see some much-needed character devel-

opment for the regular characters. “Definitely we want to explore Rembrandt and Quinn and Maggie more deeply,” emphasized producer Mark Scott Zicree. “We’re going to have Rembrandt taking a more active role, not so much falling into the victim’s role or the butt of the joke role. If there’s a joke, he’ll be in on it, and if there’s action, he’ll be driving it as much as any of our other characters. Additionally, with Maggie, we’re going to have her have a softer tone, not be quite so in your face. She’ll still be strong, but she’ll be someone that people will want to be with, will want to spend time with. So already in the scripts we’re deepening her character a lot. Chris Black did a really good script [“Common Ground”] that has a very good take on Maggie, where she’s strong but human, and we get a sense of her—she seems much more real and reflective in the episodes

Kari Wuhrer as Maggie, dubbed “danger bunny” by those fans who resent her traditional genre role.



SLIDERS

THE NEW WRITING TEAM

Exec producer David Peckinpah on rebuilding.

By David Z.C. Hines

Most television series have a large number of staff writers, a trend that has its advantages and disadvantages. Having many writers on salary means that the series' executive producers have a pool of talent familiar with the show, and thus a guaranteed number of produceable scripts—always a palliative to executives' ulcers. The downside, however, to having many writers on salary is that *many writers are on salary*, which adds to the show's cost. In addition, a large staff can increase the number of rewrites, which often leads to the sense that the series is being written by committee—tremendously frustrating for staff writers and free-

The original ensemble, O'Connell and Derricks with John Rhys-Davies as Arturo and Sabrina Lloyd as Wade.



lancers alike. SLIDERS's fourth season will take a more cost-conscious approach, with only four staff writers, most of whom have a track record with Universal.

The SLIDERS staff is headed up by executive producer David Peckinpah (nephew of Sam). The sole veteran of SLIDERS's days on Fox, Peckinpah took up screenwriting at a friend's suggestion after his prose sales proved less than lucrative. He broke into series television on CBS's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, where he was introduced to prose science fiction by award-winning fantasist George R. R. Martin. "I came on SLIDERS due to a situation with Universal," he explained; "they wanted to bring me in on a development deal, and they were looking for someone to run SLIDERS. They had the writing staff and at that point they had a physical producer, Alan Barnett, who had been on the show for a couple of seasons."

Peckinpah controls the overall vision of the show, but intends to step back somewhat from actual scripting. "I'm probably going to direct this year more than write," he said. "I'll be directing three or four. I wrote the first episode, I may write the last episode. But [Marc Scott] Zicree and [Bill] Dial and [Chris] Black are all really good writers and they're probably going to be doing three or four episodes each."

Co-executive producer Bill Dial, brought on by Peckinpah, is one of a comparatively small number of television writers who has written for hour-long dramas and half-hour sitcoms; his credits



The new ensemble fourth season on Sci-Fi (l to r): Cleavant Derricks as Rembrandt, Jerry O'Connell as Quinn, Karl Wuhrer as Maggie and Charlie O'Connell—Jerry's real-life brother—as Quinn's brother Colln.

include STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE, STAR TREK: VOYAGER, and WKRP IN CINCINNATI. "I've done comedies and dramas and two-hour movies," he said. "Most recently I co-created and executive-produced a show called LEGEND for the United Paramount network—it starred Richard Dean Anderson, and it was a Western, although it did have some science fiction elements to it."

Despite Dial's credits in SF-TV, he admitted that he does not have a strong ground in science fiction; his focus is heavily tilted towards characterization. "I'm essentially here for history and I'm here for drama and for comedy. And what I've tried to do is consider what life must be like

for people like Quinn and Maggie and Rembrandt who have been doing this. Essentially they're homeless people, and their lives aren't under their own control. And Quinn, all of them, have gone through horrible tragedy—I mean, there's got to be some kind of psychological toll with what they go through. I put myself to thinking about that. What is it like emotionally for these characters? What kind of road are they travelling aside from going through that wormhole? What is it doing to their heads? What is it doing to their relationships? So that's where I've been working."

When Dial needs to consult regarding the speculative aspects of the series, he usually

The writing and producing team behind the show's new incarnation on cable's the Sci-Fi Channel (l to r), veteran David Peckinpah, producer Marc Scott Zicree, co-executive producer Bill Dial and Chris Black, executive story editor.



turns to Mark Scott Zicree. Zicree, who grew up watching the original TWILIGHT ZONE and OUTER LIMITS, and decided he wanted to be a writer when he saw Harlan Ellison's Hugo- and WGA-winning STAR TREK episode "City on the Edge of Forever," believes his familiarity with the genre was a large part of landing the job.

"Basically, because I'd been on as executive story editor on BEYOND REALITY, which was a USA cable show, Manya Joblin, who's a VP with USA and with the Sci-Fi Channel, knew and liked my work, and she recommended me to David Peckinpah and David and I met and hit it off," Zicree recalled. "I think also David was looking for some one with a lot of science fiction experience, and I think the fact that I'd written the book *Twilight Zone Companion*, written for STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION, BABYLON 5, BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, FOREVER KNIGHT, TWILIGHT ZONE, etc., etc., convinced him that I really knew the genre and would know what had been done and what hadn't been done. Because I think we both had the goal of doing stories that were fresh."

The fourth member of SLIDERS's writing staff, executive story editor Chris Black, never expected to write for television. "I went to USC film school and always wanted to work in feature films and thought the best way into that would be to write." Black has discovered he loves writing for television.

Although Black's first script is one of the darkest of the season, his first love is comedy. He greatly admires Darin Morgan's work on THE X-FILES. "I would love to try and do that on this show," Black said, "and to generate some of the episodes that really have bizarre twists and are fertile ground for comedy and yet without undermining any of the integrity of these characters or sabotaging the seriousness of what their quest is and what their mission is, to really exploit the comic possibilities of some of the worlds they might slide into. And hopefully if I wind up writing a couple more scripts this season, I'll get a chance to do that." □

"Being with Sci-Fi now and the freedom and content they're giving us," producer David Peckinpah said, "we can get cerebral, not just run and jump action."



In fourth season's "World Killers," Quinn meets his doppelganger who has transported everyone off this alternate Earth, with Pepe Serna as Roberto.

I've seen that deal with her. And I think that's a good template; in fact, I'm rereading Chris's script again, to just get that voice in my head."

Peckinpah elaborated: "Rembrandt becomes more a co-leader this year, less the follower. We're looking at it because we now have three sliders—more of an equal decision-making process. That was one of the other edicts from Fox last year; they really wanted Jerry to be the leader, and they wanted everybody else to be kind of following behind him—and the cast was uncomfortable with that and we were uncomfortable with that. So this year there's really much more of an equality among them. Which is more fun to write and more fun for them to play."

As for Maggie, continued Peckinpah, "What we are looking at as far as her character evolution this year is her actually becoming now a Slider rather than an independent operator who just happens to be Sliding with them. There is a definite attraction between her and

Quinn that was explored at the end of the last season which we are trying to keep on the simmering stage. At this point we're really not thinking of getting them together in a romantic way. And she will step up to the plate and really assume a lot of the storyline."

Quinn will also go through some changes, but Peckinpah was reluctant to discuss them. "All I can tell you is that he's going into a whole new life. That's all I can reveal at this time," he chuckled mysteriously. He was willing to admit that Quinn's life will be changed when a new regular character will appear on the show beginning in "Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?," the sixth episode. "Jerry's real-life brother is going to be coming onto the show as a regular playing his brother from an alternate world—Charlie O'Connell—who's actually a year younger than Jerry but will be playing a year or two older."

Colin, who hails from a non-technological world and thus has more of a wide-eyed quality

to him about the alternate worlds he encounters than do the other characters, proved more of a writing challenge than the producers had anticipated. "Initially we were thinking of him more like Quinn," recalled Zicree, "and it became problematical because you didn't need two Quinns. So we met with Jerry O'Connell, we met with his brother Charlie, we talked with them, we got a sense of how they were alike and how they were different as individuals, and then just started batting stuff around in-house. And then we came up with a few alternatives that we didn't care for, that just didn't really click, as we were starting to work out stories. They really weren't giving us enough juice. And finally David Peckinpah came up with an idea, a take on the brother that we all liked. And as soon as he said it, it was one of those 'of course' moments, and that gave us our insight into his personality, and now we're starting to generate stories dealing with him. And we're having a lot of fun with it."

In addition to improved characterization, promised Peckinpah, viewers can expect to see more ambitious stories, including some long-term storytelling. "We're going back into the exploration of the Kromaggs that were introduced in Tracy's script 'The Invasion.' They were an interesting idea that we're now going to expand on, so that we'll have this kind of warrior Viking race of Neanderthal-like people that are dominating and conquering every parallel world they come in contact with as recurring foes for the Sliders over six shows."

The Kromaggs made their presence felt in "Genesis," the season premiere, written by David Peckinpah. "At the end of the season last year," Peckinpah elaborated, "Remy and Wade were sent to Earth Prime with Rickman's timer and our people Maggie and Quinn were left behind with their timer and with the idea that they would be able to follow the photon trail back, left by Rembrandt and Wade, and they would be able to return to Earth Prime. And so we have established that the

timer has malfunctioned, and they have been three months behind them, kind of random sliding—and finally do end up on Earth Prime to find that it's been overrun by Kromaggs and Remy is in prison and Wade is nowhere to be found...it's a fairly tough show; it's dark emotionally, it gives the actors a chance to stretch, and I hesitated to make it so dark but to introduce a race of higher primates that are absolutely ruthless and relentless you need a rather dark palette. The Sci-Fi Channel is willing to play ball with us, so we're going for it." The episode, Peckinpah hinted, will also contain several surprises for the characters and the audience.

Although the Kromaggs will be "ruthless and relentless," the writers hope to make them more than Mongols of paratime by developing them as individuals and as a culture. Zicree explained, "Although they're the enemy, they do have, from their viewpoint, a valid reason for what they do. So although we're going to keep them as the adversary and fairly dark characters, we're going to get to know them as people and as individuals. So far, in David's script ["Genesis"] and in Chris's, we really get to know them better, and there's another script that we have in story at the moment called 'The Dying Field,' in which we meet a hybrid Kromagg/human and get to know her. So each Kromagg story we do, we're going to be delving deeper into that culture, deeper into that backstory. So the face of the enemy will become—I was going to say 'a human face;' it's not quite a human face, but it's certainly a personality that we can connect with....And also we'll find there are differing philosophies in the Kromagg culture, so some of the Kromaggs we encounter will be more hard-edged than others; they aren't a uniform mindset. As with any culture, there's diversity."

The greatest challenge for SLIDERS's writers remains dictated by the series format: telling a new story in a different alternate world every week poses logistical problems, both within scripts and in the real

"I hope that people who've watched in the past realize we're going to try to be true to the show," writer Chris Black said. "And true to the characters."



John Rhys-Davies in third season's "Exodus," a two-parter in which he left the series and his co-stars due to continued dissatisfaction over script quality.

world.

"We're having to tell these beginning, middle and end stories, set up a world, and resolve everything in 48 pages," said Peckinpah ruefully. "That doesn't leave a lot of room for character development, and for moments that are off-story, that aren't simply plot-mulling the next story point from A to B. And it seems that in this kind of storytelling it's very hard to develop these characters with a degree of consistency over the season when the shows by their nature are so busy with plot. And we're trying to figure out a way to open the show up a little bit, so we have a little more room for those character scenes, which are everybody's favorite scenes."

Another problem the producers plan to fix is SLIDERS's long-standing lack of internal consistency. Said co-executive producer Bill Dial, "There's a lot of evidence in reading the show bible and reading the material by people who watched the show that there could have been a little more consistency in

the way the stuff works. We spent a couple of weeks up here with the new staff guys just trying to figure out what the hell the timer was and how does it work, because there were two or three different versions of it. Particularly last year. The third year there were two or three versions of the timer and how it worked and what it did and what it couldn't do and so forth. Just getting stuff like that cleared up."

To meet the challenge of building a new world every week on a syndicated budget, SLIDERS is taking steps to tell its stories efficiently. Zicree toured the set of BABYLON 5 to study that show's low-cost, high-impact production model—although, he cautioned, "We're not really utilizing the BABYLON 5 model in terms of production, because that's all set on one soundstage, it's all interiors; they never go on location. Our show really can't do that; we do have location shooting. The way we're trimming back is—we're not trimming back at all in terms of the

kinds of stories we can do. There hasn't been a single instance where David's said, 'Well, we could have done that last year but we can't this year.' Mainly what we're doing is using what we've got very efficiently. For instance, we know that we can do either one big stunt or one interesting optical per act. We've got four acts. So we basically structure our stories to make use of that."

As opposed to previous seasons, SLIDERS is shooting on the Universal back lot, which gives the series several existing sets to work with. The series is also making some use of a standing set, unusual for an anthology series. "There's a hotel that we're calling the Chandler Hotel," Zicree explained, "and we've built this massive set that includes the lobby and the bar and so forth, and pretty much every episode we'll be redressing that; in every world it'll have a slightly different function, be dressed a different way, so I think we'll get a lot of use out of that."

All told, the SLIDERS crew doesn't see their lowered means as a limitation, and they're looking forward to premiering on the Sci-Fi Channel. "The Channel," said Peckinpah, "has been incredibly supportive. I worked for USA for a few years. I knew some of the same people. But our programming executive at Sci-Fi I happened to work with before, Steve Sardelli, and he's very bright, and a big fan of the show, and very supportive, and his notes are without question the most articulate I've gotten at any network."

Concluded Chris Black, "I hope that people who've watched the show in the past, who are probably justifiably concerned about the change of the guard—because it's changing networks, it's a completely new writing staff and very few of the people are around who conceived of the show and have worked on the show—realize that we're going to try to be true to the show, we're going to try to be true to the characters, and make it a fun, interesting show to watch. And we're just going to write the best episodes we can do." □

GEORGE R. R. MARTIN'S DOORWAYS

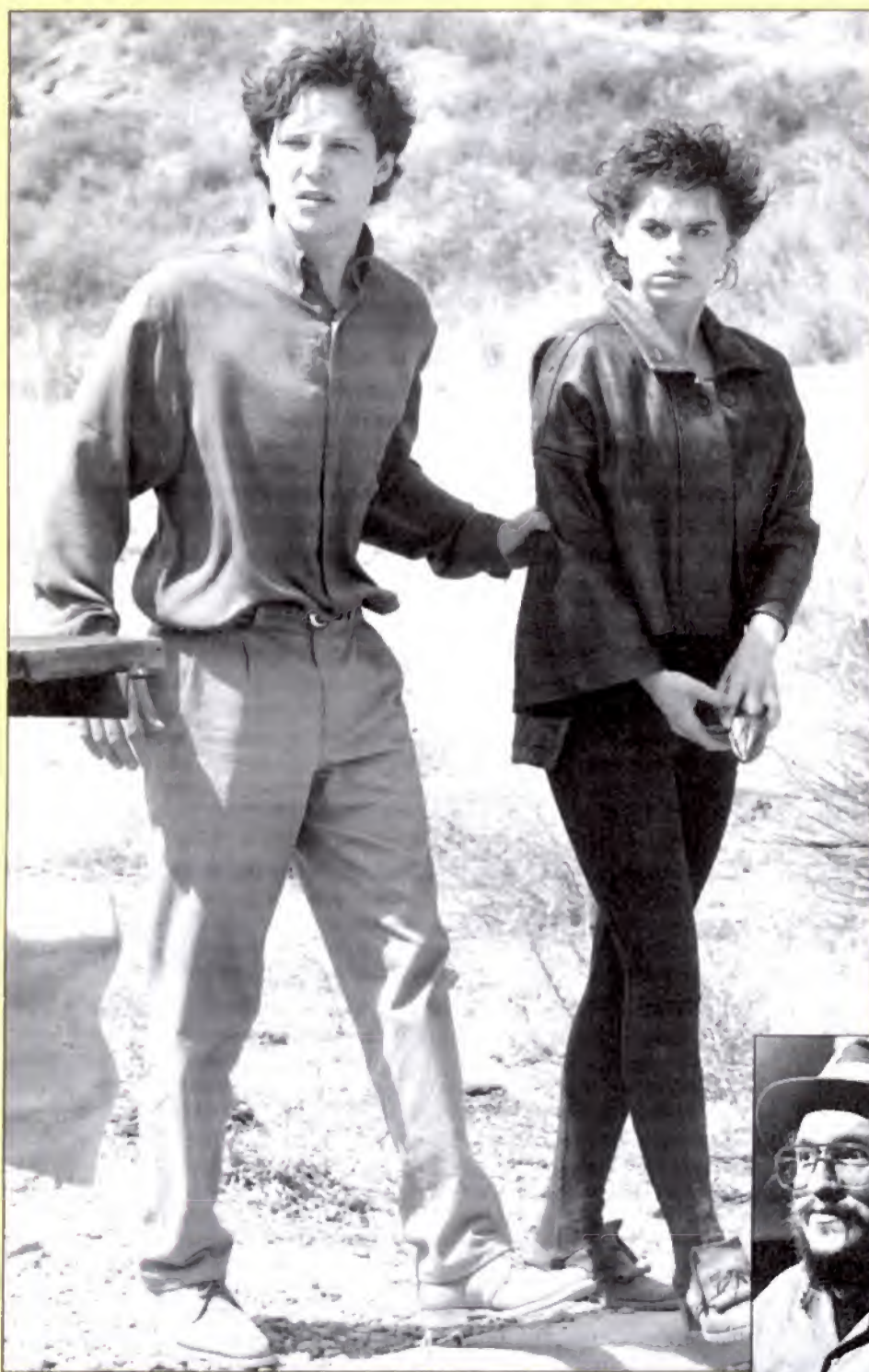
The story behind the celebrated SF author's unsold alternate universe pilot.

By Sheldon
Teitelbaum

Acclaimed science fiction print, screen and TV writer George (NIGHTFLYERS, TWILIGHT ZONE, BEAUTY & THE BEAST) R. R. Martin called it "the last virgin territory" for mass market TV science fiction. "We've seen space travel," he said, "we've seen time travel, but apart from a few rare instances like the BBC production of AN ENGLISHMAN'S CASTLE (or the 1963 British feature, IT CAN'T HAPPEN HERE) we've rarely seen a serious exploration of the theme of alternate histories and parallel worlds."

That was to have changed, however, with Martin's pilot for ABC called DOORS. (The name was changed to DOORWAYS over concern for possible litigation by Oliver Stone or the Jim Morrison estate.) Martin considers his unsold pilot the inspiration for Tracy Torme's SLIDERS.

Noted Martin on the Internet, "At the time, when it appeared that DOORWAYS would be on the ABC Fall 1993 schedule, Torme's [agent] approached me while I was visiting my own agent—we are both represented by ICM—and said that his client had read the script, loved the concept, and would be interested in writing for the show if we went to series. A mutual friend



Dr. Tom Mason (George Newbern) and Cat (Anne Le Guernec) in Martin's promising alternate universe hopping pilot for ABC-TV.

[Harlan Ellison] has subsequently told me that Torme says he has 'never' read the DOORWAYS script and never expressed any interest in writing for it. I have no way of knowing one way or the other. I have a great deal of respect for Harlan and if he says that Torme says this, I believe that Torme says this. It was not Torme who approached me. It was Torme's agent, speaking on behalf of Torme. I have been in the business long enough to know that agents sometimes, well...embroider if they smell a job.

"DOORWAYS was pitched to the Fox network on the same day it was pitched to ABC," continued Martin. "At that time, the Fox execs told me they loved it, it was very original, they'd think about it. ABC bought it before they finished thinking. Almost two years later, when DOORWAYS was complete, we showed the pilot to Fox after ABC chose to go with LOIS & CLARK. Fox passed at that time. Six backup scripts were also shown to Fox, but I have no idea whether they read them."

The plot of Martin's DOORWAYS involved Cat (Anne Le Guernec), a young woman from far afield, on the run from Trager (Kurtwood Smith), who covets a



George R. R. Martin

device she carries that permits free entry into any number of parallel worlds. She materializes in the middle of an L. A. freeway, and after an unhappy encounter with a truck, is treated by young resident Tom Mason (George Newbern).

Curious about the mystery she represents, he inadvertently follows her through a "door" into a parallel world in which an oil slick-devouring microbe ran amok and wreaked havoc with the world's petroleum supplies. Together, they strive to keep Trager from capturing the device, which he would use to wreak some havoc of his own.

Martin was joined on the show as co-executive producer by Jim Crocker, a television writer who contributed scripts to BAA BAA BLACK SHEEP, SIMON & SIMON, MAX HEADROOM and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST, and Crocker worked as supervising producer during the first season of the CBS version of TWILIGHT ZONE.

The DOORWAYS pilot was directed by Peter Werner, an Academy Award-winning director whose credits include HIROSHIMA, THE IMAGE, LBJ: THE EARLY YEARS, episodes of MOONLIGHTING, and the pilots for NED BLESSING, D.E.A., and MEN.

Anne LeGuernec is a Parisian stage actress who appeared in Paris productions of plays by Ibsen, Moliere, and Chekov. Though having appeared on French television and film, LeGuernec had never acted in English before landing the role of Cat in DOORWAYS. In fact, she had never set foot in the United States until Columbia flew her in to Los Angeles to read for the part.

SFX for the pilot were provided by Bruno George, SFX coordinator on TWILIGHT ZONE and MAX HEADROOM. A variety of SFX houses contributed to the pilot, including Video Image, Illusion Arts, Topix, and Filmtrix.

A rough cut of the DOORWAYS pilot was screened for ABC, allegedly to great enthusiasm. The network ordered six additional scripts for the series, written by Jim Crocker, Ed (LAW & ORDER, REASONABLE DOUBTS) Zuckerman,

“We’ve seen space travel. We’ve seen time travel,” said Martin. “But we’ve rarely seen a serious exploration of the theme of alternate histories and parallel worlds.”



Newbern persuades Le Guernec as Cat not to use her weapon. The French actress portrayed an alien with a device permitting free entry to parallel worlds.

Steve (directed CHERRY 2000, wrote and directed MIRACLE MILE) DeJarnatt, J.D. (TWILIGHT ZONE, exec producer of GONE TO TEXAS) Feigelson, Michael Cassutt (a former Science Fiction Writers of America Grievance Committee chair with extensive TV credits—he was story editor for MAX HEADROOM, and had worked on TWILIGHT ZONE), and Martin.

“I’d stake that six against any six writers of comparable experience on any show in TV,” said Martin. “In some episodes,

the [timeline] differences became apparent very quickly,” said Martin, “though the precise place where history diverged may remain a mystery. Some of the worlds were quite close to our own [a boon to budget-watchers], some dramatically different.”

Martin’s own episode, according to reports the writer filed on the commercial computer infonets, was set in a big city called Bowie, in an alternate universe in which the Alamo came out a little differently. Here and now, the Repub-

lic of Texas never joined the union, but went on to conquer Old Mexico and absorb most of the western states as well as Hawaii and Cuba.

“It’s an interesting world,” said Martin. “I plan to have fun with it....but it may never be safe for me to go to Texas again.”

The pilot was edited into two versions. The 90 minute version was to screen—but never aired—on American TV as a made-for-TV movie, whereas a two-hour version was prepared for European TV release. “The European cut complicated and slowed everything down,” said Martin. “We’ve had to do everything twice in terms of dubbing, on-lining, color timing and sound effects.”

Noted Martin, “DOORWAYS has been released in many foreign countries on video, but not in the U.S. Nor has ABC screened it. ABC paid for and has the rights to telecast the 90-minute version. They scheduled it [once] for a [one-hour] slot, well, over a year ago, and had to pull it. Ninety minute slots are very hard to program. ABC does not have rights to the [two-hour] version, as they paid only for the 90 minutes and refused to up the ante when we ran over budget and Columbia asked them for more money.”

Martin acknowledged that he would likely have been constrained in his universe-building efforts by production costs. “I do think the occasional truly wild alternate would help keep this series fresh however, so from time to time, I wanted to throw in an overtly fantastic universe, and perhaps a bizarre SFnal one.”

Martin screened the pilot for various SF conventions. “I showed it at the World Science Fiction Convention and in Los Angeles,” he said. It was a rough cut, noted Martin, but the response was enthusiastic. “When asked how they’d rate the program, we got 12 excels, 33 goods, three fair, and zero poor.”

Though long ignored by screen and TV, the alternate history theme has enjoyed a long and distinguished history in literature. In 1836, Louis-Napoleon Geoffrey-Chateau



Cat encounters Thane (Rob Knepper) her pursuer from a parallel universe. Inset: The Palanquin, the vessel of the Dark Lord, Thane's master.

published the first known example of alternative history: *Napoleon and the Conquest of the World, 1812-1823*. Its premise was that the great French emperor had in fact not made the fatal mistake of wintering his troops in Moscow.

Nearly a century later, in 1931, a number of noteworthy historians and social commentators, including A. J. P. Taylor, G. K. Chesterton and Winston Churchill, tried their hands at alternative history in a book of essays called *If; or History Rewritten*. Thirty years later, *Look Magazine* published two memorable essays: *If the South Had Won the Civil War*, by MacKinlay Kantor and *If Hitler Had Won World War II*, by acclaimed journalist William Shirer. The game was afoot.

Its appeal, moreover, has extended to a wide gamut of writers. Within the so-called literary mainstream, writers like Britain's Ronald Clark

titillated the English literati with books like *Queen Victoria's Bomb*, exploring the consequences of somewhat premature nuclear proliferation. In 1976, Kingsley Amis published *The Alteration*, about a modern-day Europe under Catholic domination, while in 1991 his son Martin published *Times Arrow*, about the moral implications of a universe in which time runs backward. Len

When Tom and Cat enter a door to a parallel universe they discover an Earth with no oil or petroleum, dependent only on horse-drawn transportation.



Deighton, Thomas Berger, Vladimir Nabokov, and John Hersey have each tried their hands at remaking the present by tinkering with the past.

It was not long, however, before science fiction writers tried, with varying degrees of success, to make the game their own. In 1953, Ward Moore wrote *Bring The Jubilee*, also about a Confederate victory. The best of the "Hitler Victorious" books (there have been so many such stories written that they now fill an entire anthology under that name) was Philip K. Dick's award-winning 1952 novel, *The Man in the High Castle*. The plot line, which unraveled in an America divided between the Germans and the Japanese, was purportedly established with the help of the Book of I-Ching.

"It's the Zeitgeist," noted Benford of the parallel universes now making the rounds of popular culture. "Throughout western civilization, we have become more and more aware in the last century of the fragility of events, the arbitrariness of history. This crucial idea emerges from some of the feelings of uncertainty and anomie and angst that go along with modern times."

Martin may have honed his own feelings of uncertainty, anomie and angst in the plethora of pitch meetings in which he has participated over the years. He noted he dreamed up the DOORWAYS concept while flying into Los Angeles to attend such a meeting at ABC. He came with several other ideas for a series, but none of these appealed to the network's programming execs.



Knepper, the villain of Martin's pilot, produced for ABC's Fall 1993 schedule by Columbia Television.

They liked the parallel universe scenario though, and hired him to write and executive produce the series.

Martin eschewed the ensemble format adopted by STAR TREK, its spin-off, and BABYLON 5, preferring, as he did on BEAUTY & THE BEAST, to center his series on the relationship between two unlikely people and their battle against adversity. "I have nothing against ensemble shows," he said, "but there are other formats. I think our characters and the worlds they visit are interesting enough to keep the viewers entertained and engrossed."

It has been difficult for Martin to see SLIDERS' relative success in the face of his own series' failure.

"I believe DOORWAYS is as good as any work I have ever done," he said. "Had it aired, it would have bid fair to be one of the best SF series in the history of television. The writing was damn fair, too. Our lead actors were

continued on page 125

FEAR AND LOATHING in LAS VEGAS

Terry Gilliam on filming Hunter S. Thompson's drug fantasy.

By Alan Jones

In the early Seventies, *Rolling Stone* writer Hunter S. Thompson went to cover the Mint 400 motor race on the outskirts of America's Number One gaming capital. But high on every drug known to man, Thompson's assignment turned into a very personal experience, one that took him to the very edge of a society fractured by Vietnam, *EASY RIDER*, the Love Generation and the Age of Aquarius. Thompson peered deep into the abyss and came back with the news that the American Dream was well and truly over. The book that emerged from his quest became the pop culture classic *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, the quintessential bible of disaffected youth who responded to its 'new journalism' stance with ardent fervor.

Ever since its publication in 1971, filmmakers have tried to bring Thompson's groundbreaking masterpiece to the screen but have failed miserably for numerous reasons. Then in early 1997 came the news that Alex Cox, director of *REPO MAN* and *SID AND NANCY*, was to start production on a film adaptation of the book for Rhino Films, the off-shoot compa-

ny of the well-established record label. Almost as quickly came the news-flash that Alex Cox had been replaced by Terry Gilliam, the genius director behind the visionary fantasies *BRAZIL*, *THE FISHER KING* and *12 MONKEYS*, and that's where the real story behind *FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS* begins.

"Alex managed to alienate Thompson, the star of the show

Johnny Depp, the producer Laila Nabulsi [who owned the rights to the book in a palimony deal with Thompson]—everybody," said Gilliam at Goldcrest Studios in central London, the post-production facility where he was tweaking *FEAR AND LOATHING* prior to its Memorial Day opening by Universal.

"Alex seems to have a way of shooting himself in the foot these days," continued Gilliam.

Gilliam directs Johnny Depp as journalist Raoul Duke in the 121 degree heat.



Lounge Lizards in Las Vegas.

"He'd written the script which was sent to me and I thought it started out very well. I laughed a lot because he had captured the book's essence. It came alive and I hadn't read the book for years. Wow, that's funny, I thought. Then it deteriorated towards the end. To be honest, I'd been asked before to direct a film version of the book around 1989. I was up for it because I thought it would be a wonderful way to start the Nineties—with a breath of fresh air, or foul air, I suppose. A chance to shake the place up a bit. But I was tied up with another project and the timing proved to be all wrong."

Gilliam received the offer to take over *FEAR AND LOATHING* at the time when his pet fantasy project *THE DEFECTIVE DETECTIVE* collapsed for the umpteenth time. "It keeps doing that but I'll get there in the end," said Gilliam. "Frankly, one of the big attractions was I'd wanted to work with Johnny Depp for a long time. So I flew to LA, met Johnny, Lailia and Hunter, and thought, if I sit down and write a new script then this could be interesting."

He continued, "There was something about the idea of working really fast and cheaply too. Alex was going to do it for



Director Terry Gilliam used makeups a la David Cronenberg's *NAKED LUNCH*.

\$7 million supposedly—it ended up costing us \$19 million. However, that was good considering it was not done as an independent production but right in the studios with union crews. The idea was to work really fast and furiously with a low budget and see if I was the young filmmaker I used to be. The answer to that is, I'm not. The whole process was surrounded by madness because we had to get going last July without the money even though it was double the Alex budget. We were writing as they were raising the extra money and putting it together as a production."

Noted Gilliam, "One of the major production problems was a guy at Rhino called Steve Nemeth. He was the arch idiot out of a pack of idiots who seemed to do everything he could to fuck up making the movie. He was never around and he was pure foolishness. We used to call him our Nemethis!"

But Gilliam had absolutely no problem with taking over the project from Alex Cox because, "It wasn't his in the first place—it was Hunter Thompson's. The qualms I had were more about taking something on that was so well known and doing it jus-

tice. So many people had incredible expectations. Plus there was this living author who was still around. And he had a gun! Scary stuff."

The person Gilliam chose to help him co-write the script was Tony Grisoni, writer of Jon Amiel's *QUEEN OF HEARTS*, and with whom Gilliam had been working for some time on a proposed project about the mythical Minotaur—"My miniskirted pagan epic," joked the director. He added, "The irony of the whole thing was that when Alex first got involved in

Depp's thinly disguised portrait of Thompson—the world seen in a drug-induced haze.



TERRY GILLIAM, DIRECTOR

"The qualms I had were about doing justice to something so well known. Plus there was this living author who was still around. And he had a gun."

FEAR AND LOATHING, Tony called him up and asked if he could write the screenplay because it was one of his favorite books and he's wanted to do it too. What a wonderful conjunction of elements. Once I'd signed up, Tony and I wrote a script in 8 days, then read it, didn't like it and rewrote it again in two."

Gilliam explained his and Grisoni's writing process: "The only way we could write the thing was to sit down and read the book and highlight all the bits we liked. What has happened over the 25 years of not making the film—and there have been so many scripts written—is writers get caught in the book's complexity. There are so many goodies in it, no one wants to leave anything out. Working this fast took that onus off of us in a sense. We had to make some real choices. We did a lot of work subsequently all through the actual shooting, but we never altered the basic structure we initially created. The further away from the era Thompson wrote about also meant we could make more cogent observations and comments. There's only a few of us

left alive from that period who are still functioning. I felt that gave me as much right to adapt the book as anyone else. I like to say we treated Thompson and his work with the disrespect it deserved!"

Benicio Del Toro joins Depp in the *FEAR AND LOATHING* cast as the other refugee from the Sixties still going full tilt boogie through the early Seventies. Depp plays Raoul Duke, a thinly disguised version of Thompson himself (who still appears daily around the world in the syndicated 'Doonesbury' comic strip), and Del Toro is Dr. Gonzo, an equally transparent fictionalization of Thompson's lawyer, Oscar 'Zeta' Acosta. The diverse characters they meet on their drug-sodden binge include Ellen Barkin, Gary Busey, Cameron Diaz, Mark Harmon, Penn Jillette, Lyle Lovett (one of Thompson's favorite musicians), Harry Dean Stanton, Christina Ricci and Tim Thomerson. Gilliam joked, "It isn't quite *AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS*, but it's close!"

Gilliam added, "It was a very hard shoot. We were like sharks constantly moving forward, never looking back, keeping going because we had this schedule that ended up being 55 days after starting off at 48. We were in Las Vegas, out in the desert in 121 degree heat, then back in L.A.—phew! But we were bold and brave about it. We threw caution to the wind. Not the most secure or solid approach, perhaps, but the 'let's just go for it' atmosphere has helped the finished film enormously."

Is this Gilliam's road movie? "Only in the sense that it's Bob Hope and Bing Crosby on acid," he joked—Raoul and Gonzo fill up the trunk of their red Chevrolet with cocaine, speed, amphet-



Depp and a Rob Bottin Lounge Lizard. Gilliam multiplied Bottin's seven animatronic heads to fill the set by doing a three pass dolly married with CGI.

TERRY GILLIAM, DIRECTOR

"I made the movie because it's a Cinematic Enema for the '90s. The whole world's so constricted and frightened to say anything. This film is the last hurrah of the '60s."

amines, marijuana, alcohol and ether as the fuel for their 'trip.' He added, "Because the characters are stoned all the way through everything is treated in realistic terms that have proved to be disturbing to people in previews. We take the stand that the whole world is fucked and this is what it feels like to be in the middle of it."

Special prosthetic makeup by veteran artist Rob Bottin and extensive CGI work helped Gilliam realize the drug abuse fantasies in *FEAR AND LOATHING*. He said, "You see bats reflected in Raoul's eyes and when he checks into the Mint Hotel, the pattern is so loud on the carpet it starts wrapping itself around his legs. Katharine Helmond (*BRAZIL*) plays the desk clerk and she morphs into a moray eel while the face of the parking lot valet also twists out of shape."

But the main special effects section occurs when Raoul enters the hotel lounge and every Lounge Lizard in the place turns into a literal lounge lizard—man-sized reptiles wearing tuxedos. Gilliam added, "We filled the set with blood too. The whole room fills up as they slide and slither around, become more bestial and start killing each other. We had such a short time to do it. We could only afford for Rob to build seven animatronic heads and rubber suits and we had to have a roomful of them. So we did a three-pass dolly shot and added complicated CGI work afterwards. It was a difficult shot to accomplish because of

all the mirrors and columns in the set." He added, laughing, "We are the only film coming out against *GODZILLA* and we have even more giant lizards than that does!"

Gilliam had nothing but praise for Johnny Depp's performance and said, "He's Hunter to a T. He has captured his voice, his movements exactly. Johnny always takes things a step up in his performances. That's why we are the perfect match because I deal in hyper-reality too. His performance is based on a real understanding of Hunter and who he is. He came to the set with ideas every single day and was a joy to work with. Some days it was just the two of us and we invented stuff really fast. He was astonishing and not frightened of anything. Well, he is actually, that Hunter will kill him once he's seen the completed movie! Other than

that he's fearless..."

While Depp fraternized with Thompson to give verisimilitude to his performance, Gilliam didn't want to have any involvement with the writer at all. He said, "I wanted nothing to do with him because he only made me nervous. I do like the book and I do want to be respectful and true to it, whatever that means. I don't want to be earnest, pedantic...but with Hunter around I couldn't do that. He's in the film for a brief moment, by the way."

He continued, "You know, I'm not sure what people are going to think about *FEAR AND LOATHING*. A recent screening focus group said there's usually one show piece in a Gilliam film, one great moment, like the dance in *THE FISHER KING*, for example, but this one doesn't have it. They also said it was darker and more disturbing than my other work. How it can be darker than *BRAZIL*, I don't know. Perhaps, it's getting to people in the way that *BRAZIL* didn't. People are walking out of *FEAR AND LOATHING* and getting really angry. Everyone seems to love or hate it, there's no middle ground. But all the

people who hate it will be the ones one wants to hate it—all the nice and polite people. Some people thought I was becoming acceptable, but that will change after this. If I don't shock and outrage here than I've failed miserably."

Noted Gilliam, "The reason I wanted to make the movie was because I felt it was a Cinematic Enema for the Nineties. The whole world has become so constricted and frightened to say anything and this film is the last hurrah of the Sixties. The last blast, a reaction to all the failure. I hope *FEAR AND LOATHING* just isn't a romp of two guys on drugs crashing around the place. It's about something. It's a reflection on the failure of the Sixties. I thought Hunter was a fake when I first started out on this journey but now I don't think he was a fraud. There's something extra in the book now from our perspective, the reflective moments being the most interesting parts."

Gilliam is expecting adverse criticism over the non-stop drug abuse in the film. "Sure, the Clinton administration will complain," he remarked. "But that's missing the point. It's a character piece where drugs are the fuel. Raoul and Gonzo's relationship is so interesting in Christian morality terms. Depp is Dante and Benicio is Virgil, the amoral pagan. One's the tempter, the deceiver, and the other is along for the confused ride. There's a weird morality to the piece; it's about lines you don't go beyond—not coke lines—but boundaries. Be outrageous by all means but where does it all stop? That gives the film a moral shape to it. I won't mind reviews along the lines of 'I felt my popcorn had been laced with Angel Dust' just as long as people understand the moral core of the movie I've been at pains to make." □

Gilliam confers with Depp on the road, returning to his low budget roots by filming a brisk 55 days. "We threw caution to the wind," said the director.



A good ride for those willing to take the trip

FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS

Universal Presents a Rhino Films/Laila Nabulsi Production. Produced by Laila Nabulsi, Patrick Cassavetti, Stephen Nemeth. Directed by Terry Gilliam. Screenplay by Terry Gilliam & Tony Grisoni and Tod Davies & Alex Cox, from the book by Hunter S. Thompson. Cinematography (Rank Film Labs color, widescreen): Nicola Pecorini. Editing: Lesley Walker. Production design: Alex McDowell; Art direction: Chris Gorak, Steve Arnold; Set design: Lynn Christopher. Set decoration, Nancy Haigh. Visual effects supervisor: Kent Houston. Lounge lizard and demon effects makeup: Rob Bottin. Costume design: Julie Weiss. Sound (DTS/DOLBY digital/SDDS): Jay Meagher. Executive producers: Harold Bronson, Richard Foos; Co-producer, Elliot Lewis Rosenblatt. Casting, Margery Simkin. 5/98, 119 mins. Rated R.

Raoul Duke.....Johnny Depp
Dr. Gonzo.....Benicio Del Toro
Lacerda.....Craig Bierco
North Star Waitress.....Ellen Barkin
Highway Patrolman.....Gary Busey
Blonde TV Reporter.....Cameron Diaz
Musician.....Flea
Magazine Reporter.....Mark Harmon
Reservations Clerk.....Katherine Helmond
Road Person.....Lyle Lovett
Lucy.....Christina Ricci
Judge.....Harry Dean Stanton
Hoodlum.....Tim Thomerson



Johnny Depp (right) and Benicio Del Toro are two wild and crazy guys in **FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS**, the filmization of Hunter S. Thomson's book.

by Steve Biodrowski

This is the best acid-inspired movie since Roger Corman's *THE TRIP*—and it's a darn sight more accurate in its depiction (at least according to the experts I've consulted—obviously, I wouldn't know anything about this personally). The film captures the highs and the lows, the terrible confusion alternating with moments of crystal clear lucidity, the fun and excitement that gives way to paranoia. In a nutshell, "doctor of journalism" Raoul Duke (pseudonym for author Hunter S. Thompson, played by Johnny Depp) gets an assignment to cover a motorcycle race outside Las Vegas. Thinking the story not worth his time, but eager to take advantage of the expenses paid by his magazine, Duke and his "lawyer," Dr. Gonzo (Del Toro), turn the assignment into a drug-filled odyssey—equal parts LSD, ether, and alcohol.

Director Terry Gilliam puts you right there in the experience. Although not entirely a subjective film, *FEAR AND LOATHING* presents its lead character's hallucinations—including Dali-esque melting carpets, literal lounge lizards, and demonic mutations—with as much clarity as the "real" surroundings, until the two blend seamlessly together. Using dark lighting, wide-angle lenses, and canted camera angles, Gilliam wants to make you feel as if you're taking the trip, too, not merely sitting back and laughing at the antics of these stoned characters. If you refuse to surrender to the sur-

realism of the distorted scenery, then the film is tremendously off-putting, but if you are willing to descend into the darkness, the result can be quite rewarding.

The unstated premise that carries the weight of all this drug-filled excess is that, in the crazy world of 1971—in the post-Woodstock era of disillusionment, of Vietnam and Nixon and unreasonably cruel and unusual anti-drug laws—the only sane response to the greed and glitter of Vegas is to get completely bombed out of one's mind and stay that way for the duration. But the film is not a simple glorification of drugs. Rather, it is a sad, despairing elegy for the lost idealism of the '60s. Midway through, Duke reflects back on the San Francisco scene of six years before, recollecting a time when the anti-war movement united youth across America into thinking they were part of something bigger than themselves that would inevitably lead to victory, though not in a "mean or militaristic sense," because the energy of the wave they were riding was too positive for that. Now, standing in Vegas, Duke imagines he can look West and see the high-water mark where the wave finally crested, and then receded, leaving only disappointment in its wake. Also, at the very end, Duke states that Timothy Leary made a grievous mistake when he tried to expand the consciousness of America's youth with LSD. Expanding consciousness makes one more aware, and to Duke's thinking, the realities of life are too dismal to bear greater

awareness of them. The sentiments expressed, far from being empty moralizing—i.e., socially redeeming value meant to justify the disreputable proceedings by denouncing them—carry the weight of true sense of loss.

Despite these qualities—and a performance by Depp that is always interesting and inventive, even though the character is the same from beginning to end—the film is not a total success. Some scenes go on past the point they're trying to make—unless you want to be really kind and imagine the point is that drug users quickly outwear their welcome. Also, as the film progresses, the behavior of Duke and Gonzo goes beyond boorishness into outright offensiveness. Thompson, writing from the inside, might have been forgiven for simply presenting his scenes nonjudgmentally; Gilliam, however, had a duty to be outraged on behalf of the characters victimized by this drugged-out duo, particularly Ellen Barkin's waitress, who has a knife flashed at her by Gonzo when she tries (quite understandably) to throw him out of her restaurant. I personally advocate the decriminalization of victimless crimes like recreational drug use, but threatening someone with a knife hardly qualifies.

By conventional standards, this film doesn't amount to much: there is little in the way of narrative, and the characterizations, once established, never develop further. Its virtues have more in common with the work of *REPO MAN*'s Alex

continued on page 125

FILM RATINGS

- Must see
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Fodder for MST-3K

GODZILLA

Director: Roland Emmerich. Writers: Emmerich & Dean Devlin. TriStar, 5/98. 138 mins. PG-13. With: Matthew Broderick, Maria Pitillo, Jean Reno, Hank Azaria, Harry Shearer, Arabella Fields.

This \$120-million Hollywood production is easily this Summer's most over-hyped "thrill ride." While the curious have been awaiting the results of this Americanization of Japan's most-beloved monster, hardcore fans have expressed outrage over the changes implemented by Devlin and Emmerich (*INDEPENDENCE DAY*). Rather than utilize the mythology established by the Toho series, this movie instead deteriorates into a retreat of *JURASSIC PARK* and its sequel *THE LOST WORLD*, with newly-hatched baby 'Zillas chasing our heroes all over Madison Square Garden, just as the Raptors chased folks through the Park. In fact, this *GODZILLA* begs, borrows, or just plain steals from everything: *THE BEAST FROM 20,000 FATHOMS*, *GORG*, *THE GIANT BEHEMOTH*—even *ID4!*—so there's little that hasn't been seen before. Surprisingly, the CG-Godzilla, although drastically redesigned, is actually pretty nifty, and exhibits more personality than the human cast: Broderick is annoyingly perky; Pitillo is a non-presence; and Reno practically faxes in his performance. Most of the effects are great, but a few shots of Godzilla being pursued by the helicopters through Manhattan's concrete canyons are decidedly videogamesque. Purists are advised to steer clear and check out the newly-released U.S. videos of Toho's infinitely superior *GODZILLA VS. KING GHIDORAH* (1991) and *GODZILLA VS. MOTHRA* (1992), from Columbia/TriStar Home Video.

● 1/2 Dan Cziraky

THE TRUMAN SHOW

Director: Peter Weir. Writer: Andrew Niccol. Paramount, 5/98. 102 mins. PG. With: Jim Carrey, Laura Linney, Noah Emmerich, Ed Harris.

One of the most amazing and imaginative films of the year, this is a rare studio production without any obvious or detrimental compromises for mass audience taste—even the star casting works perfectly. The script by *GATTACA*'s Andrew Niccol (about a man whose life, unbeknownst to him, is the subject of a 24-hour a day TV show) bears some resemblance to Paul Bartel's *SECRET CINEMA*, but the story is fresh and insightful, full of satirical jabs at product placements and sitcom standards of happiness. Director Peter Weir brings it to life wonderfully, with sly camera angles that subtly suggest the surreptitious surveillance. And Carrey acquits himself quite well as a dramatic actor, evoking sympathy while carefully using his patented schtick only at precise intervals.

●●● 1/2 Steve Biodrowski

ANIMATION

QUEST FOR CAMELOT

Director: Frederick Du Chan. Screenplay: Kirk De Micco, William Schifrin, Jacqueline Feather, David Seidler; from the novel "The King's Damsel" by Vera Chapman. Warner Bros, 5/98, 85 mins. G. Voices: Jessalyn Gilsig, Cary Elwes, Gary Oldman, Eric Idle, Don Rickles, Jane Seymour, Pierce Brosnan, Gabriel Byrne.

Warners' quest to dethrone Disney, features two scene-stealing supporting players: the villainous Knight Ruber (Oldman) and the eccentric Devon and Cornwall (a two-headed dragon voiced by Idle and Rickles). Both are such beautifully crafted personalities that you wonder why the filmmakers didn't spread the energy from these characters throughout the rest of this very generic animated effort. The film jettisons most of the Arthurian legend, in favor of a more predictable musical fable that seems stilted, in a direct-to-video way. The character design is surprisingly bland (King Arthur looks like a medieval G.I. Joe), and the film wastes some top talent (Sir John Gielgud gets about three lines as Merlin). The songs, by Carol Bayer Sager and David Foster, try to inject a touch of Broadway, but seem insidiously created in a ready-for-the-Top-40 fashion.

With Oldman's loopy, Cockney accent, Ruber is the type of character who is sorely missed when not on screen ("I was in the neighborhood and I thought I'd invade," he quips). Devon and Cornwall are the epitome of the supporting animated player, speaking humorous lines at the perfect moments ("We're what happens when cousins marry," is how they explain their appearance). The two are also given the chance to show off, with a musical number, "If I Didn't Have You," which is sung amidst a beautifully dizzying montage that lampoon everything from Sonny and Cher to THE LION KING.

The film also boasts some of the most spectacular animated action sequences since Disney's RESCUERS DOWN UNDER (1991). A fiery escape from a dragon's lair is staged at a breathless pace, and a giant rock ogre, composed from CGI graphics, is a nice visual surprise. Unfortunately, it's difficult for the audience to warm up to the main characters—the heroine Kayley and the blind hermit, Garrett—because they are incredibly milquetoast. Perhaps Ruber, Devon and Cornwall should have been re-cast in the leads? Now that would have been a QUEST worth going on. ● Mike Lyons

ART HOUSE

SHOPPING FOR FANGS

Directors: Quentin Lee & Justin Lin. Writers: Dan Alvarado, Lin & Lee. Margin Films, 5/98. 90 mins. R. With: Radmar Jaq, Jeanne Chin, Clint Jung.

This film follows several oddball characters, interweaving their stories in unexpected ways and attempting to resolve the plot lines into a satisfying conclusion. Alas, AFTER HOURS it ain't. Phil is a mail room worker in a corporate environment who thinks he is turning into a werewolf. No one believes him, not even his brother-in-law, who is studying lycanthropy. Yet day after day, Phil's hair grows faster, and



The villainous Knight Ruber (voiced by Gary Oldman) is one of the few highlights in Warners' derivative animated musical QUEST FOR CAMELOT.

his aggression increases.

The central surprise at the climax is so obvious that it's laughable. (There are a few intentional laughs, too.) The makeup is so amateurish that the characters couldn't possibly be fooled, and neither is the audience. Directors Lee and Lin try to parody so many genres and cultural idiosyncrasies simultaneously that the film loses credibility on all counts. The okay attempts at comedy undermine the supposedly serious subplots. There is no depth to the characters, and only Phil is the least bit identifiable. In the end, one can only advise viewers: Go shopping for a better movie. ● Paul Wardle

BORDERLAND

THE BIG LEBOWSKI

Director: Joel Cohen. Writer: Ethan & Joel Cohen. Gramercy, 3/98. 117 mins. With: Jeff Bridges, Julianne Moore, John Goodman, Steve Buscemi.

After a decade of films, it seems clear that the Coen brothers live in a world permanently tinged by their own brand of fantasy. So it's no surprise that THE BIG LEBOWSKI—a simple (and surprisingly layered) tale of a Los Angeles slacker and his bowling-loving buddies—is also given to impromptu spurts of fantasy (bowling fantasy, of course). The often humorous story is framed by an omniscient narrator who informs us that Jeff "The Dude" Lebowski (Bridges) is a man perfectly fit for his times (the early 1990s). A case of mistaken identity pulls this lazy, unemployed bowler into a complex scenario involving the kidnapping of the porno star-wife of a wheelchair-bound millionaire (also named Lebowski). This "plot" seems just an excuse to have the colorful characters interact with each other.

Occasionally, the pot-smoking Dude flitters off into a fantasy world. Early on, he floats above the city in pursuit of a stolen carpet before being sucked into a bowling ball and rolled down the lane. In a hilarious, later scene, he fancies himself the star of "Gutterballs," a Busby Berkeley-style

porno flick which has him floating face up under the short skirts and through the spread legs of dancing girls lined along a bowling alley, where Saddam Hussein hands out the bowling shoes. Following their Oscar win for FARGO, the Coens (aided by confident, well-honed performances from Bridges and Goodman) have successfully created a believable world of eccentrics all leaning against each other for support. Only their sure hands could pull off THE BIG LEBOWSKI's audaciously off-beat sensibility and make it work so well. ●●● Anthony P. Montesano

MADE-FOR-TELEVISION

PETER BENCHLEY'S CREATURE

Director: Stuart Gillard. Teleplay: Rockne S. O'Bannon, from the novel White Shark by Peter Benchley. ABC-TV, 5/98. TV-14. 4 hrs. w/commercials. With: Craig T. Nelson, Kim Cattrall, Matthew Carey, Giancarlo Esposito.

If Stephen King is Brand Name Horror, Peter Benchley is Brand Name High Seas Adventure. Over two decades after JAWS, he is still riding the wave of that mid-70s classic. Following in the wake of THE BEAST, this second TV epic goes beyond the waves as its lumbering sea thingie becomes bipedal. During the Viet Nam war, so we're told, the Navy used an island as a base of operations to create hybridized sea soldiers: part dolphin, part shark. Their latest monstrosity kills off all its brethren and escapes into the sea thanks to a guilt-ridden member of the scientific team. Twenty-five years later, its cage is opened by some amateur treasure hunters, releasing the fish guy to return to its original lab, now the workplace of shark expert Simon Chase (Nelson), who is being visited by his scientist wife Amanda (Cattrall) and son Max (Carey). No sooner can you say, "Don't put your hand in there!" than the beastie mutates into a land shark nastier than anything Chevy Chase ever offered.

As with many mini-series these days, the four-hour running time was excessive. Part Two is padded with

some ridiculous slo-mo, a touch of teen love, and even a little tropical hoodoo, which goes nowhere; an hour or so and a few useless characters could have been cut. Through its clichés and meandering plot, however, CREATURE does come across as a decent enough monster movie. When we finally get to see the star of the title, a humanoid shark, the film picks up its pace and becomes a fun, growly romp good enough for a wet Saturday afternoon. I've never minded the man-in-the-suit variety of monster as long as the suit was good, and CREATURE offers a Stan Winston creation you wouldn't want to see on any beach. When it comes to video, be ready to fast forward and you'll have a good enough time. ●● Frederick C. Szebin

MERLIN

Director: Steve Barron. Writers: David Stevens, Peter Barnes, story by Edward Khmara. NBC-TV, 5/98. 4 hrs. w/commercials. With: Sam Neill, Helena Bonham Carter, Rutger Hauer, Isabella Rossellini, Miranda Richardson, Martin Short.

Televised fantasy gets a shot in the arm with this wonderful detailing of the Merlin legend. Those annoying Christians are gaining such a foothold in Britain that Queen Mab (Richardson) plots to overthrow the them by bringing into the world a half-human wizard she dubs Merlin. The young magician learns the keys of magic from shape-shifting Frick (Short), but falls out with Mab when he learns that she let his mother die during childbirth. Part One details Merlin's failed efforts to get Mab out of his life as she destroys everyone he loves, and ends as the mage plunges Excalibur into the stone to keep it from lustful King Uther (Jax). Part Two nicely condenses the familiar Arthurian legend—Camelot, Guinevere, Lancelot, Mordred—and ends Merlin's hope of creating a heaven on earth.

The entire program is stylishly directed by Barron, who makes full use of the technology given to him, including simple but wonderful in-camera trickery and some of the best CGI yet. Remarkably, the very busy camera never gets in the way of the narrative, but strengthens it by intensifying the otherworldly nature of the fairy tale material. Part One is best, as Merlin is engulfed by the magical world forced upon him. Fairies flit like bees, while the plot becomes more entrenched in magic and imagination, creating some genuinely charming scenes. Part Two becomes more entrenched in the very human drama occurring in Camelot, and familiarity of the material weakens the tension a bit, but the actors and production values are up to the task of bringing such a sweeping tale to life. Short is purely perfect as the trickster Frick, and Richardson—gravelly voice and all—is wonderful as both evil Queen Mab and the pure and lovely Lady of the Lake. Neill is always good, as is the rest of top notch cast in this mini-series, which gives hope that true love is out there, and that television, when properly inspired, can rise above the tired clichés that the extended format drama seems to have become.

●●● Frederick C. Szebin

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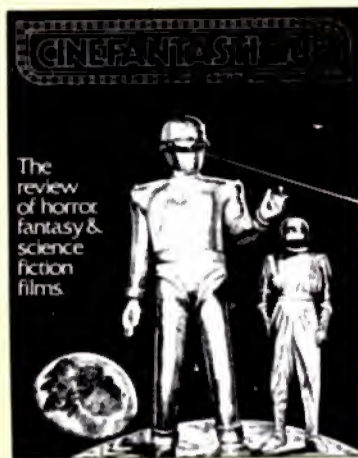
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HALLOWEEN 20

continued from page 11

understand that's why they went to Wes Craven on *SCREAM*, you know he can handle it." But Curtis applauded the skill of director Miner: "He's cut the movie so tightly, we already have 66 minutes of cut footage that's as tight as you're going to get."

FEAR AND LOATHING

continued from page 123

Cox (who left after developing the project) than with that of Terry Gilliam—being a sort of objective, amoral look at a bizarre subculture. Perhaps a low-budget version directed by Cox would have better captured the sensibility of the material and appealed to a cult audience who would have embraced the film. As an attempt to reach a mainstream audience, this is a complete failure, but those willing to go along for the ride should enjoy the trip.

DOORWAYS

continued from page 119

sensational. George Newbern is a very fine young actor, as those who have seen in *FATHER OF THE BRIDE* and *DESIGNING WOMEN* and his many other roles can testify. And Anne Le Guernec

was simply magic, a French actress utterly unlike anyone on television. If *DOORWAYS* have gone, I believe Anne would have become a major star.

"*SLIDERS* is utterly unlike *DOORWAYS* in its characters, stories, tone, and general intelligence level. *SLIDERS* is relentlessly dumb; *DOORWAYS* tried at least to be smart. *DOORWAYS* had humorous moments—I be-

lieve humor is essential in television—but we strove to be witty and quirky, and the main thrust of the show was drama and action/adventure. *SLIDERS* has a lot more humor and that humor is broader, louder and, well, dumber. If we were trying for a touch of Woody Allen, they are trying Benny Hill. That's a very crude metaphor, but it gives you the idea.

"They are two very different

Horror's new faces: Josh Harnett, Michelle Williams, Joseph Gordon Levitt and Jodi Lyn O'Keefe, giving John Carpenter's HALLOWEEN a teen makeover.



shows, but the *concept* is pretty much identical. Each week the lead characters travel to another alternate world. Unfortunately, in television, concept is all. If I did a show about a pair of FBI agents investigating paranormal activity, the characters and tone would likely be utterly different from *X-FILES*, but the series would still never get on the air, because the executives look only at the concept. In that sense, *SLIDERS* has effectively killed whatever small chances I have remaining to launch *DOORWAYS*...but those chances were one in a million anyway.

"I said that the concepts were 'pretty much' identical. There is a small difference. In *DOORWAYS*, the heroes were being pursued by a bad guy from Cat's original world. On *SLIDERS*, they are just adventuring around, without the pursuit element. The distinction is not sufficient to distinguish the two shows in the minds of executives."

And if it had gone as Martin envisioned, perhaps *SLIDERS* wouldn't even be around...or maybe *DOORWAYS* would be making a move to the SciFi Channel after cancellation for low ratings.

LETTERS

BORROWING FROM THE CLASSICS

In the classic TV series *THE ADVENTURES OF ROCKY AND BULLWINKLE*, there was a recurring gag: whenever a hero was in a precarious situation or something strange was going on, two bystanders would comment on the situation ("Now there's something you don't see everyday...").

In James Cameron's *TITANIC*, as a lifeboat pulls away from the sinking ship, Molly Brown looks back and says, "Now there's something you don't see everyday"; in *DEEP RISING*, the character played by Treat Williams, upon seeing the monster, quips, "Now there's something you don't see everyday."

Are movie-makers paying homage to the great Jay Ward?

Leo Doroschenko
West Orange, N.J. 07052

IN PRAISE OF "LOST IN SPACE"

Your vituperative review of *LOST IN SPACE* [30:3:58] is not only mean spirited but also inaccurate.

Item 1: Major West does not say, "This Cold War just got hotter." This statement is made by his friend Jeb. Incidentally, this is a great adventure movie, not Shakespeare. Why do you over-analyze and read into this comment a wistful longing for the Cold War?

Item 2: The two robots are never aboard the Jupiter 2 simultaneously. The new, menacing robot is left on the Proteus, destroyed. Will creates the bubble-headed robot after the Proteus adventure. Please pay attention! If your reviewer cannot keep up with plots, have someone explain the story to him. This will avoid glaring errors.

I saw *LOST IN SPACE* in several venues: Montreal, Toronto, Chicago, Cleveland, and Columbus, Ohio. Each time I saw the film, the theater was packed with diverse people of all ages. The audience seemed delighted, which means the film has universal appeal. Not only does the action-packed plot move quickly, it is clearly understood by anyone of at least average intelligence.

The special effects are breathtaking and add to the excitement. Casting and acting are flawless. The theme music is wonderful—not "syrupy"

Has anyone ever looked closely at the stupid *STAR WARS* trilogy or the dull, we've-seen-this-before, tired *STAR TREK* movies? We're talking some very fake special effects and wooden acting here! What about the months-long hype for *ARMAGEDDON*? Talk about hokey!

LOST IN SPACE is both fun and poignant. The characters are richly drawn, and the dysfunctional family concept, timely. It is very difficult to take a beloved television series that went from adventure to camp to something in between and make an updated film and please everyone. Everyone connected with the *LOST IN SPACE* movie deserves a hearty round of applause, not a negative review.

Dennis Alexander
Lakewood OH 44107

THE SONS OF MOBY DICK

Regarding Steve Biodrowski's article on *Moby Dick* and genre films [30:3 59]: in an early draft of the *JAWS* script, Quint was first seen sitting in the back of a movie theater watching the ending of the Huston film and laughing uproariously. Also, lest the article inspire some filmmaker with what he thinks is originality, in the late sixties, Ray Bradbury wrote a science fiction adaptation of *Moby Dick* as a play entitled "Leviathan 90." It was about a crazed spaceship captain chasing the meteor that had blinded him and the L.A. production starred William (BLACULA) Marshall.

Rick Mitchell
Los Angeles, CA 90036

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

I must say I was totally impressed with your piece by John Thonen, the Videophile article about "Miracle Mile" [30:2 60]. I first saw that movie six years ago, and was blown away, (no pun intended). I've been telling folks about it ever since. Sadly, most have never seen or even heard of it for that matter. It's really cool to finally be able to say, "So, it's not just me." I think it's a totally awesome flick. I'm glad I'm not alone.

Chris Benedetto
Brooklyn, NY 11220

SPECIES 2 EFX

I would like to correct your May coverage of *SPECIES 2* [30:1

16]. On page 23, you incorrectly credited Adrienne Morot with designing the green screened Chrysalis Boy (inset photo). I was hired by Steve Johnson to design and construct that effect with my own crew (Rich Mayberry and Bill Morrison) based on storyboards and Johnson's input. We also designed and built the various tentacles that exit the face. This is not to downplay Morot's involvement, who, by the time of our arrival at XFX, had already directed the sculpture and molding of the body and the casting of some pieces. Morot directed the finish cosmetics and was available to me (Johnson was often on location) to clarify any cosmetic decisions.

Additionally, my crew and I were ultimately responsible for the full-body hanging boy (the large photo). This effect utilized the same Morot generated molds as the previous effect. My crew and I modified existing armature pieces, poured silicone body parts (with Morot) and assembled the full body. I designed and built the levitation rig and my crew and I designed and built the various 20' tentacles that lift and articulate the boy's body. Morot again directed the finish cosmetics.

To be precise, Morot designed a different "Chrysalis Boy" puppet that was built to show multitudes of polyps bursting out of the boy's face and body.

Many talented technicians created make-up effects for *SPECIES 2* and I was just a minor part. However, since you credited that particular effect (photo), I would appreciate credit where credit is due.

David Barton
Modus Efx Productions
Sun Valley, CA

BEAST OF HOLLOW MOUNTAIN LASER DISC—PART II

This is in response to reader Rick Mitchell's reply to Dennis Fischer's commentary on *THE BEAST OF HOLLOW MOUNTAIN* [30:1 62].

It's obvious to fans of stop-motion that *BEAST* utilized a jointed model for most scenes. The replacement models were used in the long shots of it walking (which has smoother movement than the poorly articulated model). There is also more to the behind-the-scenes story—from what I've been told by long-time stop-motion artists in

Hollywood...

It seems that in order to help sell his idea to Nassour, Willis O'Brien left models with him at the studio (after being assured that Obie's script would be filmed and that he'd helm the effects). These models were: Marcel Delgado's Gwangi (which Marcel personally told me was Obie's favorite), with movable brow and capable of sneering; the horses and cowboys from *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG*. Obie's package was acquired very cheaply, as he was promised the prestige work he was accustomed to. Sadly, promises were not kept, and when production did begin, Obie wasn't allowed entry to the studio. The horses and cowboys were torn down to see what made them work. Nassour didn't like Gwangi's appearance, I've been told, and it too was torn down—and rebuilt (although I believe it may have been a case of avoiding copyright infringement—having also completely rewritten Obie's treatment). Part of the problem with the *BEAST*'s animation (besides a lack of talent) might have been with the style of armature—Obie favoring mostly the hinge and swivel units rather than ball & socket. Obie seemed to be the only one comfortable with this type of joint. Even Ray Harryhausen and Pete Peterson had difficulty with these joints on *MIGHTY JOE YOUNG*, and had the shoulder joints reworked into ball & socket configurations on the Joes they worked with most often. Also, the *BEAST* model looks cast, and if it was baked in an oven—in order to cure the rubber—the washers on the hinge joints have a habit of drying out and causing friction problems during movement. None of the professionals I know have any idea of what happened to the models.

Ron Lizorty
Hazelwood, MO 63042

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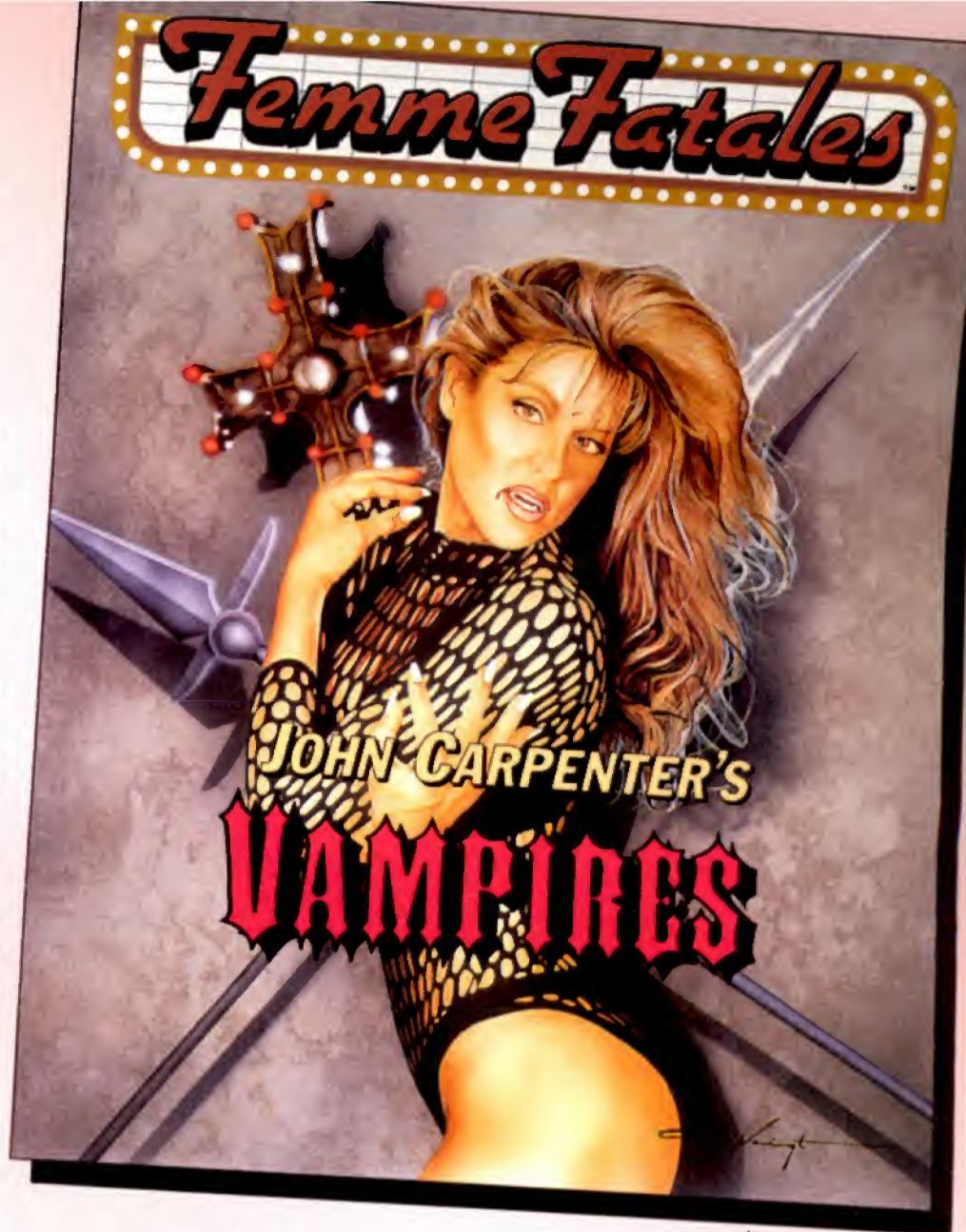
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